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THE FRIGHT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE HEIRESS” “THE MERCHANT’S DAUGHTER”
“THE PRINCE AND THE PEDLAR,”
“NAN DARRELL,” &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE FRIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

THE party at the Gunnings consisted of those already named, and some four or five other respectable ladies and gentlemen, who being well dressed and well mannered served to fill up the table ; but do not deserve especial notice.

Dudley was not in the room when Grace and her uncle arrived ; but entering shortly after was greeted by Julia with such a flattering

smile and speaking blush, as amply repaid him for the cold politeness of his host and hostess, and the formal, stately bow of Mr. Rolleston.

Mr. Bradley was so delighted at seeing Grace, that he insisted on handing her down to dinner contrary to etiquette, and the wishes of his son, who however secured the place on her other side, and did his utmost to convince her that he was a most agreeable person and a devoted admirer ; and all this in such a pleasant and apparently natural manner, that but for some early recollections he might have become a favourite with his cousin, ‘the sallow, scraggy, sulky fright.’

It was delightful to see the pleasure of the honest hearted Bradley in conversing with Grace, and the interest with which she listened to all his details concerning Elmwood Lodge, the gardens, the farm, and the pet plough ; which he had again strong hopes of bringing to perfection.

Mr. Rolleston remarked this with a good-

natured smile, a very rare occurrence with him; whilst Lord Brotherton observed it and Stephen's attentions with no pleasurable expression of countenance. Julia and Ernest sat together, and seemed for the space of one hour and a quarter, the duration of dinner and dessert, to be all the world to each other, a seeming far from pleasing to Mrs. Gunning and her husband.

Lord Brotherton was the first to enter the drawing-room; but though Julia was looking more than commonly beautiful, he passed her without even a remark, and took his seat by Grace, with whom he instantly began to converse, compelling her undivided attention by his lively and piquant sallies.

“ You thought me a very naughty boy yesterday, Miss Grace Trevyllian; for enjoying the *brouillerie* between the lovers, and I am afraid I was a little malicious. Dudley had just bought a horse over my head, on which I had set my heart; and grudged me a few smiles from his betrothed, so I could not resist a

small revenge. Pronounce my pardon; and you shall see how good I will be for the future. I will neither attempt a flirtation with the lovely Julia; nor say any thing that can disturb the harmony of ‘*I promessi sposi*.’

“I trust that is beyond your power, my lord.”

“Do you really think so?” he questioned with a provoking smile. “Look!”

Grace did look; and saw that Julia, instead of attending to Ernest, who was leaning over her chair, was watching herself and the viscount with a somewhat discontented air.

“Well;” said his lordship finding that she did not speak. “Do you trust to my want of will or want of power?”

“I will rely on your good feeling.”

“You shall not find that reliance vain; under your influence I shall become a perfect Sir Charles Grandison. I will place my conscience in your keeping fair Miss Byron; and you shall school it to your pleasure.”

“Pardon me, my lord, if I decline an office

for which I am not fitted; and which might not prove a sinecure," she answered gaily; but with a certain air which told the viscount that she was no subject for mere compliment, or idle gallantry.

"You fear the office of my conscience-keeper might prove troublesome;—your evil opinion of yesterday is not overcome," he remarked, a little piqued at her coldness. "Do you never change an opinion?"

"Whenever I see fitting occasion."

"But first impressions are strong with you, I see, and not easily overcome, so I must trust to time and my own exertions to win you to think of me as I desire. I will be so good—so very good, that you shall not be able to deny me a portion of your regard," he added with a mingling of gaiety and earnestness, both flattering and amusing.

"I will not doubt your lordship's goodness; but I pray you to ground it on some better and higher motive."

“ You shall prescribe the motives as well as the acts ; I will be as clay in your hands to be moulded as you will.”

“ I entreat you not my lord, for your own sake. I am in malicious or mischievous moods sometimes, and may be tempted to fashion you into some double-faced monster, or fantastic elf.”

“ I will not believe you when you so libel yourself ; and shall creep into your presence when I may, as to a refuge from the evil thoughts of this evil world.”

“ Grace, my dear, my aunt is very anxious to hear you sing,” said Julia approaching at the moment, not sorry, as his lordship judged, of a good opportunity for breaking off what he termed his flirtation with her sister ; for her restless glances had not been unremarked by his quick eye, nor her craving after universal admiration.

Grace rose directly and walked to the piano, well pleased that her conversation with the viscount had been interrupted ; for she, too,

had learnt that Julia wished to reign without a rival—the despotic queen of every heart. But if Grace expected to be thus freed from Lord Brotherton's attentions she was mistaken; he followed her on the instant, without even exchanging a remark with Julia, and remained by her side till the song was concluded, looking the pleasure which he really felt at her performance.

“Good evening,” said his Lordship to Grace. “I will not attempt one word of praise; for words would ill express the impression left by your silver tones; nor will I linger, but depart with that bewitching strain still sounding in my ears, hoping that it may abide with me in my dreams. I shall see you to-morrow, for I am to call on Mr. Rolleston, touching some county business.”

Grace only bowed with a rather incredulous smile.

“Good night, Miss Trevyllian,” said the viscount turning to Julia, who was standing a

little apart ; but sufficiently near to have overheard his parting speech to Grace. “ I should have been at Lord Tylney’s an hour since ; but could not summon sufficient self-denial to tear myself away. How fascinating your sister is ; I have almost ceased to envy Dudley.”

Before Julia could reply he had turned to others, and having concluded his adieux quitted the room without waiting to listen to her singing, which he had declared but the day before to be unrivalled and irresistible.

She sang, but she did not sing well, for she was out of humour. Ernest was conversing, or at least standing at the other end of the room with one of the guests, having left her on finding her inattentive to his remarks ; and Stephen Bradley had sought Grace instead of turning over the leaves of her book as he was wont to do when no more esteemed cavalier was in attendance. Mr. Bradley was loud in his praise ; but she cared little for his approbation.

“You should go and see the Egyptian statues and curiosities just imported; they are really well worth the trouble,” remarked Mr. Swinfen to Mr. Rolleston.

“Worth seeing on account of their intrinsic beauty? — their antiquity? — or their originality?”

“For all, I believe; but really I do not know much about these things; there is one, however, who does. Here Dudley! will you come and describe the Egyptian curiosities to Mr. Rolleston. I cannot tell how it is that I always make a mess of a description; but you have been in Egypt and know all about them.”

“Have you visited Egypt since we met at Elmwood Lodge?” asked Mr. Rolleston.

“Yes,” replied Dudley, advancing in obedience to Mr. Swinfen’s summons. “I could not resist a visit to Alexandria with the chance of acquiring further information concerning the Ptolemies.” This reply was accompanied by a smile so arch, and so thoroughly good-

humoured, that even the cynical Rolleston yielded to its spell, and smiled in return without that satirical curling of the lip which had annoyed Ernest at their former discussion of the subject. This open reference to his boyish pedantry had disarmed the uncle as it had before disarmed the niece, leaving him the victor, who had once been the vanquished.

“Perhaps you will be kind enough to communicate some of the information there obtained, for the advantage of less learned stay-at-homes,” observed Mr. Rolleston in a more friendly tone.

“With pleasure, sir; you shall have the birth, parentage, and education;—thoughts, acts, dress, manners, and alliances of the whole Ptolemies if you desire it; or, just as a beginning, some brief account of the curiosities which Mr. Swinfen has so eloquently lauded.”

“Suppose we begin with the last first,” observed Mr. Rolleston amused with the young man’s good-humoured badinage of himself.

A formal bow was all the sign of recognition which had before passed between them; but so much was Mr. Rolleston pleased and interested by Dudley's descriptions that he continued to converse with him for a considerable period. A pause having at length ensued, it was broken by Ernest in a way which had not been expected by his companion; who was still unwilling that he should become his great-nephew, through a marriage with Julia.

"I am rather awkwardly situated, Mr. Rolleston," began Dudley in embarrassment. "To maintain silence as to your generous kindness which overcame the obstacles to my union with your eldest niece, may appear on the one hand ungracious and ungrateful; whilst on the other, having received no communication directly or indirectly on the subject from yourself, and fearing that you rather consent to, than approve of our marriage, my thanks may appear impertinent."

“I admire your frankness, Mr. Dudley; and will be equally sincere. I did not desire the union, and only consented to exert my influence at the urgent entreaty of Grace, whose earnest pleading in your behalf I could not resist.”

“Indeed! I was not aware that I owed your kindness to Miss Grace Trevyllian,” replied Dudley colouring.

“Possibly not; yet such was the fact,” observed Mr. Rolleston, puzzled to determine whether the young man was pleased or pained at the disclosure—surprised he undoubtedly was.

“Still I have much to thank you for,” remarked Ernest after a pause.

“I am not so certain of that, so defer your thanks to some future time,” said Mr. Rolleston gravely, turning away to prevent a renewal of the conversation.

Dudley remained a few moments in thought,

then crossing the room took a seat by Grace, Stephen Bradley having just quitted her side to converse with Julia at the piano.

“I have only just learnt that to your generous interference are Julia and myself indebted for Mr. Rolleston’s consent to our union,” he began in a tone that startled her whom he addressed. “I would fain thank you; but—”

“Thanks are confusing things to the sayer, and the hearer; let us suppose them fully understood,” said Grace interrupting him. “I have no doubt that you are very grateful; only let me see you and Julia happy—I ask no more.”

A slight faltering of the voice showed her emotion; though she struggled to conceal it.

Ernest’s cheek kindled as he gazed on the half averted face of the speaker.

It was some moments before he spoke again; and then his manner was abrupt and the subject

on which he touched had no seeming connection with what had passed before.

“I have heard from Lord Leverton this morning, who desires me to say a thousand kind and pretty things should I have the opportunity.”

“I was not aware that you knew his lordship,” stammered Grace looking down and blushing the more deeply, because she felt her colour heighten, and that Ernest’s eye was on her.

“Oh! yes; we are great friends,” observed Dudley with something like a sigh.

“I hope he is well,” said Grace endeavouring to subdue her confusion.

“Quite well; and will be quite happy when informed that you take so kind an interest in his welfare.”

“Lord Leverton cannot doubt my esteem.”

“He does not doubt your esteem,” said Dudley with an emphasis on the last word,

which again embarrassed his hearer. "And I am happy to say that he has some hopes of proving perjury against the witness, whose testimony deprived his father of the property."

"I am rejoiced to hear it."

"My friend may then seek the bride of his choice ; his is too noble a heart too be bartered for wealth."

"It is indeed !" replied Grace with a warmth, almost amounting to enthusiasm, forgetting the interpretation that might be put on that warmth.

"Leverton is most happy—his is a fate to be envied"—said Ernest with a strange, sad tone, after gazing for an instant on the blushing speaker.

"You are mistaken," said Grace quickly as he rose to leave her.

"Am I mistaken ? In what ?" he questioned eagerly, standing before her with an expression in his dark eyes which Grace dared not interpret.

"Nothing—no matter:" she replied, bending so low over a book on the table that he could not see her sudden wanness.

The next momemt he was conversing with Julia, who received him with a smile, for which kings might have contended. Pleading an engagement he soon after departed with only a passing bow to Grace ; and a polite good night to Mr. Rolleston.

"I have not had half a talk with you, Grace, so must come and see you to-morrow," said Mr. Bradley as he handed his favorite to the carriage.

"You must include me in the party, most reverend father," observed his son.

"Do you promise not to tell your mother of the flirtation?"

"I will promise any thing for the pleasure of meeting Grace."

"We shall see then ; but those who are so ready to promise are rarely very strict in performing," replied his father gaily.

“Very true ;” said Mr. Rolleston ; but Grace only heard him, and not another word was spoken by the uncle and niece during their drive home ; each had ample food for thought.

A long discussion ensued on the following morning as to Grace’s entering or not entering into society ; which ended in a compromise, their wishes having clashed. It was settled that Grace should gratify her country curiosity by visiting all the exhibitions and public buildings, in short should be introduced to all the morning lions ; but that for the present she should be excused from entering into fashionable gaiety further than occasionally attending the opera.

“This is a horrid country taste, and will bring discredit on your friends,” said Mr. Rolleston. “Mrs. Gunning will refuse to chaperon you—Lord Brotherton will refuse to flirt with you ; and I shall be set down as an

old frump of a great-uncle—a perfect dog in the manger—who will neither go into society myself, nor let you do so, because I want you to amuse me in the evening. What is to be said to all this ?”

“ That I do not wish Mrs. Gunning to chaperon me—that I do not wish Lord Brotherton to flirt with me ; and that I shall be much happier spending a quiet evening with you, than in a crowded saloon of strangers who would not care whether I were dead or alive twelve hours later. I shall never win back my roses in hot rooms, which would give me a headache and prevent my sleeping.”

“ I doubt if you slept last night to judge by your looks.”

“ I did not sleep well ; so here is a fresh argument for my keeping quietly at home,” said Grace with a colour as bright as her uncle could have desired.

“ So let it be then for the present ; but by this plan you will see less of Julia.”

“ Oh ! I can see her in the morning, when she is not more agreeably occupied.”

“ Do you mean by that when playing the betrothed with Dudley, or the flirt with Brotherton ?”

“ The former, of course ;—the latter I hope never to see.”

“ Hopes are sometimes disappointed, Grace ; but I say nothing, having no inclination to mis-match my friends’ silks, or prick my fingers with their embroidery needles.”

“ Have you not uncle ?”

“ Do you think I have, Miss Grace, and fear my handling your needles, and entangling your silks ?” asked Mr. Rolleston in return, with such a significant glance that Grace was embarrassed, though she tried to hide it by a laugh.

The Bradleys came early. The father was always welcome to Grace ; and the son did his utmost to rival his parent in her estimation,

flattering himself that he had been more than tolerably successful.

Scarcely had they taken leave before Lord Brotherton appeared nominally to talk county business with Mr. Rolleston (something touching a new road), but really to play the agreeable to Grace; and he too departed with the pleasing idea that he had made a favorable impression, and the hope of meeting her again in the evening, as Mr. Rolleston had most graciously accepted the viscount's offer of his aunt's opera-box, where he engaged to meet them.

Lord Brotherton kept his word; and before the conclusion of the overture was at Grace's side, where he remained, conversing with his usual gaiety, pointing out all the distinguished persons present, and amusing his hearers by his acute remarks.

In a box nearly opposite were the Gunnings with Julia and Ernest; the latter appearing graver than usual, whilst his liege lady seemed in almost exuberant spirits, receiving with her

wonted grace the homage of the numerous beaux who crowded round her throughout the evening.

“ Miss Trevyllian is looking very beautiful to-night ; yet I have not approached her. See, how good I am becoming under your influence !” observed Lord Brotherton in a low tone to Grace.

“ Yes ; Julia is looking very beautiful ; there is not one in the whole circle, who can hope to rival her,” she replied, gazing on her sister with the fondest admiration.

“ In Miss Trevyllian’s beauty you forget my goodness ; I was in hopes you would have praised me.”

“ Such eagerness for praise will make me suspect the reality of your goodness ; and set it down as a mere pretence—the veil to some motive which you dare not avow.”

The viscount looked a little annoyed ; but whispered, as he handed her from the box ;—
“ I do not deserve your praise, for there was,

no self-denial in my conduct. I was too happy where I was to wish to move."

Had Lord Brotherton said this gaily and aloud Grace would have received it as one of the idle compliments in which he was in the habit of indulging; but she could not doubt from his manner that he wished her to give a deeper meaning to his words; and Grace pondered on them ere she sank to sleep—sleep long delayed, for the throbbing of her temples kept her awake for hours.

Day after day did Mr. Rolleston accompany his niece in her visits to the lions of the metropolis, guided by her wishes, imagined or expressed; and day after day did Lord Brotherton and Stephen Bradley sit with Grace at home, or join in her excursions, though those excursions were not confined to the fashionable parts of 'The Great Babylon;' and to Grace's great surprise her uncle, if he did not actually invite them to be of the party, never discouraged their attendance; and showed his

hospitality by asking them to dinner more than once. But this was not the only point in Mr. Rolleston's conduct which amazed his niece ; and for which she could assign no motive. He who avoided society in the country appeared to court it in town ; calling on many of the friends and acquaintances of his younger days—accepting their invitations to dinner ; and in return receiving them at his own house ; ever playing agreeable to the young men who, attracted by the report of Grace's fortune, far more than her sweetness and intelligence, followed and flattered her at every convenient opportunity. True he would sometimes vent his contempt for these headless and heartless youths in merry jests, or bitter sarcasms ; but he was civil when they called, and never tried to avoid their visits with which Grace would have gladly dispensed. Mr. Rolleston, considered morose in the country, was thought sociable in London ; but no one wondered at his good humour so much as his niece. Not

more than twice had she seen that hateful cynical smile; and the unhappy person who had felt its power was Mrs. Bradley, who called the day after her arrival, intimating her intention of seeing a great deal of her dear Grace, to whom the girls were so much attached. This declaration with some invidious censure conveyed in her blindest tone against her very dear young cousin were more than Mr. Rolleston's good humour could endure; and one smile and one sentence saved Grace and himself from the threatened infliction. The families were on usual family terms—they met occasionally, and always with friendly seeming; but they were not intimate; and Mrs. Bradley, changing her plans, instead of spending her time in courting Mr. Rolleston and his niece, seriously applied herself to procuring eligible husbands for her daughters, particularly her eldest; whilst her husband attended cattle shows, and agricultural meetings, whiling away his spare half hours with his

little cousin, as he still called Grace, who became a greater favourite every day.

What puzzled Grace the most in Mr. Rolleston's conduct was that whilst he freely conversed on all the sights they beheld; and all the new acquaintances they formed, he rarely, if ever, made a comment on Lord Brotherton, Stephen Bradley, or Ernest Dudley.

The last, indeed, they hardly ever saw, as neither chanced to be at home when the other called; and though Ernest occasionally met, he never joined them; and if they dined in company together, which was yet more rare, he never sought the side of Grace, and talked but little with her uncle. He looked ill and out of spirits; Julia said was anxious about his mother, who he feared was in a declining state, and to whom he was going as soon as he had completed the important business which alone detained him in town.

Julia herself was as gay as ever; but Grace sometimes thought her gaiety was forced; and

the care with which she avoided a *tête-à-tête* confirmed the suspicion; indeed the sisters now seldom met, as the elder preferred the parks to pictures and churches, whilst the youngest never appeared at those splendid parties of which Julia was the greatest ornament, either spending her evening at home with her uncle, or accompanying him to some of the more quiet dinners to which he was invited by old and new friends—friends at least in the common acceptation of the term.

Mrs. Gunning made many pretty speeches about meeting so seldom, which Mr. Rolleston answered with his town manner; but even Grace did not show that anxiety for her sister's presence which she had formerly done. Was she too becoming cold and heartless, the mere puppet of society and conventional modes? Mr. Rolleston made no remark on this change, if he saw it; and it was scarcely possible to suppose that he did not see it, for his eye had not lost its keenness, nor his

intellect its penetration, though his look was less cold and stern, and his speech less bitter than of old ; his manner was softened rather than changed—he awed less, but he still awed.

“ I have a petition to present,” said Mr. Bradley entering his cousin’s morning sitting-room.

“ You had better present it to Grace, she cannot say—no—to a beggar,” observed Mr. Rolleston.

“ So I will then. Grace, will you and your uncle dine with us to-morrow ? My wife sent a long rigmarole about the shortness of the notice—but I only say I hope you will come. It will be almost a family party, the Gunnings—Julia and her devoted—Lord Langfield ; and one or two more.” Grace having heard her uncle express a horror of family parties, was seeking for some excuse when her purpose was defeated by Mr. Rolleston replying—

“ There ;—I told you Grace never said no to a beggar ; so you may count on seeing us.”

“That is kind and friendly ; and now I must be off, for Somers is waiting for me to go to Smithfield.”

“I am always glad to oblige Bradley, who is one of the kindest, most straightforward men in the world ; and it would be cruel to disappoint his very clever and courteous lady, who wishes to parade the rich Mr. Rolleston before Lord Langfield, as her husband’s very affectionate cousin ; and Lord Langfield before Mr. Rolleston as her intended son-in-law. His lordship is not over brilliant ; but so much the better, he will make a more efficient tool in the hands of his mother that is to be. Then the lover of the beautiful Miss Trevyllian is only a plain Mr. with but six hundred a year ;—whilst the lover of Miss Bradley is a Viscount with thousands, instead of hundreds per annum. What a triumph ! She has forgotten the old proverb :—

“There’s many a slip,
’Twixt the cup, and the lip.”

It is to be hoped that it may not be brought to her remembrance by bitter experience. You must marry a Duke, Grace, and become the heiress of Rolleston Court to mortify Mesdames Gunning and Bradley.”

“Excuse me, uncle; I have no desire to mortify any one, and trust that Rolleston Court will for many, many years be the abode of its present possessor.”

“You will never get on in the world, child, with such tramontane ideas,” said her uncle gaily, unwilling to show how much he was touched by the earnestness of her last words.

“You ought to have been born to a fortune, for you will never achieve one. I expect to be amused to-morrow; there will be moves and counter-moves, all the manœuvres of a game of chess. The straightforward movement of the poor simple pawn, which advances it so little—the cross fire of the bishop, his power half impaired by only moving in one line; and the sly and sidling step of the knight, which

enables him to win important positions unsuspected. By the way, one would have expected a bold, dashing movement from a gallant knight, instead of the stealthy step of the petty marauder. Then the strong castle, too sturdy to verge from the straight line, gaining the victory by the mere dint of power; and finally the graceful queens of the game, the favourite pieces with all brilliant players. Now stepping aside to avoid the insidious advances of a knight—now overthrowing a castle;—anon flirting with a bishop—then dashing across the field to coquet with the opposing king before the face, and in spite of the teeth of her rival majesty; yet ever ready to return on the hint of danger to defend her lawful sovereign.—There is a something dazzling, almost glorious in the queen.”

“ But the king—you have omitted him;” said Grace.

“ Oh! he is but a nonentity—an encumbrance—a dead weight—a King Log! But I

am not quite sure, in the present instance, whether the mate of the beautiful queen may not turn out King Stork, which will spoil the harmony ; though he has been exceedingly patient hitherto, as if bound over to be good—fettered by an inward consciousness of error. It has always struck me as singular, that if chess were really invented at the Siege of Troy, as some maintain, the king was not a more important person, the monarchs there assembled being mighty heroes, and despotic sovereigns, at least in time of war. One would rather suspect the game to have been invented in a republic, to show that a king was but an incumbrance ; or in a very, very limited monarchy where the sovereign was not only denied the choice of his ministers, but was a puppet in their hands. Unless, indeed, it had no reference to politics, but was meant to teach us a deeper and more philosophical moral. To show for what worthless nothings all contend ; toiling, plotting, fretting, risking their own lives,

and slaying their brethren for the sake of a cipher."

" Might it not be the device of the very loyal, to inculcate that all should be risked for the king, as the king, let his individual character be what it may. The devotion to a principle, rather than a person."

" Capital, Grace ! you shall be Princess Metternich, or Lady —— I will not say whom. I was inclined to wonder that the game was not prohibited by the Holy Alliance—you seem to better understand their tastes. There is only one difficulty in this solution. The little power accorded to his majesty ; who never moving more than a step at a time, can execute no *coups d'état*."

" I am not going to discuss politics, my dear uncle ; being wise enough for once to decline speaking on that of which I know nothing ;—but how do you cast the characters to-morrow ?"

" Excuse me ; I shall not affront your penetration by declaring ; nor suppose you capable of

female curiosity—the desire of knowing what character I shall assign to Miss Grace Trevyllian.”

“ I have no curiosity on that point ; of course, I am the simple pawn, stupid, poor, and powerless ; swept down and trampled on by the more daring.”

“ You forget that the pawn sometimes survives, when the cunning knight and the powerful castle have been demolished ; and becomes itself the queen, bringing not only safety, but victory to her consort ; and I am not sure whether you have not much of the loftiness and devotion of the queen under a show of simplicity.”

“ In that case, the pawn becomes queen only on the downfall of another ; on whose ruin she rises ; no generous spirit could rejoice in so doing.”

Struck with her remark her uncle looked at her steadily for a moment, and then observed :

“ In some cases the king is allowed two queens—will that suit you better ?”

“ Oh, no ! worse, and worse !” said Grace rising to leave the room.

CHAPTER II.

I HAVE introduced my readers to one dinner party, and now I intend to prove my ultra hospitality by introducing them to another; people will dine every day—if they can. Is any one so rude as to remark—why this is the same thing over again? With a difference in some few points, his exclamation is correct. The last was a dinner at Mr. Gunning's—this is a dinner at Mr. Bradley's; and dinners are one of those privileged things at whose frequency no one grumbles. Did you dine yes-

terday?—Yes. Do you hope to dine to-morrow?—Yes. So do I. Why should not the Bradleys and the Gunnings do the same? There are some things of which people never seem to weary—oh that my books may be ranked among the privileged class!

There were other guests besides those named by Mr. Bradley. Lord Brotherton invited by the host with the desire of pleasing Grace; Mr. Marshall, the son of a country neighbour, to gratify his youngest daughter; both contrary to the secret wishes of his wife; and Mr. and Mrs. Cathcart, with Mr. Hilton; all very proper people for filling up a table.

“I have been out of humour all day at my inability to bring you the prints of which I spoke,” said Lord Brotherton to Grace, seeking her as soon as he had concluded his greeting to the lady of the house. “I must procure some of the seed of the famous new turnip to reward Mr. Bradley for his invitation, since the sight of you has raised me from the depths

of despair to the summit of delight; and
‘ Richard is himself again ! ’ ”

“ I cannot consider your ill-humour, or your delight to have been justified by the occurrences to which you assign them,” replied Grace Trevyllian gravely.

“ I fear I am too easily depressed or exalted,” observed his lordship with an air of indifference, after one keen glance at the speaker. “ I must learn to take things more philosophically. Oh ! there is your beautiful sister, looking more beautiful than ever ; I must go and tell her how much her absence was deplored last night,” and Viscount Brotherton crossing the room took a seat by Julia, and engrossed the whole of her attention, though Dudley sat on the other side.

The wishes of Mr. and Mrs. Bradley not exactly coinciding each endeavoured to marshal the company into the dining-room according to his, or her taste ; but the lady having tact and etiquette on her side, carried the day on the

most important points. Harriet sat next Lord Langfield, and Grace was separated from Lord Brotherton, which gratified the malice of Mrs. Bradley, who could not bear the idea of—the fright, as she still called her, marrying an Earl presumptive, whilst Lord Langfield was only a Viscount positive ; besides she wished her son to match with Mr. Rolleston's heiress, as all the world believed his youngest niece would infallibly be. To cloud her satisfaction, Eliza was seated next young Marshall, whose father had not more than eighteen hundred a year, evidently much pleased with the vicinity ; and Julia was beside Lord Brotherton, who seemed resolved to make himself most exceedingly pleasant to his fair neighbour, either from a desire to pique Grace into greater warmth, or annoy Dudley ; or from inability to withstand the power of Julia's attractions, which were supposed to have once held him captive.

“ I would have arranged it otherwise, and placed you next Lord Brotherton,” whispered

Bradley to Grace, who sat at his left hand, where Mrs. Cathcart should have sat.

“ I prefer the present arrangement,” replied his cousin.

“ Ay, I understand those things,” observed her host with a significant, and incredulous smile.

But if Grace preferred this arrangement at the beginning of dinner, she deeply regretted it before its conclusion ; observing that Julia appeared the happiest of the happy in receiving Lord Brotherton’s marked attentions, whilst Dudley looked grave and wretched, though making an effort to converse with his next neighbour.

Stephen Bradley was more than commonly entertaining, yet Grace was most heartily rejoiced when the ladies adjourned to the drawing-room.

“ Mr. Dudley looks ill,” said Grace to Julia as they were standing together, a little apart from the others.

“He is grown very dull and tiresome,” replied Julia pettishly, joining Harriet and Eliza ; and not once again throughout the evening could Grace address her sister without a chance of being overheard.

Nearly the same arrangement that had prevailed in the dining-room prevailed in the drawing-room. Lord Langfield still seemed devoted to Harriet Bradley, and Lord Brotherton continued his attentions to Julia, with no other interruption than an occasional glance at Grace and Ernest. When Miss Trevyllian was called to the piano, he chose her song, he praised her singing in low words that none beside could hear, and which brought up brilliant blushes ; and when she retired from the instrument he again took his station near her with the air of one, who could be happy nowhere else.

But not as in the dining-room did Ernest sit on Julia’s other side ; he did not even approach her, seeing how fully her attention was

engaged ; but after conversing a few moments with Mr. Rolleston who was as usual coldly polite, he entered into a learned discussion with Mr. Cathcart.

“ Our wishes will be accomplished,” observed Mrs. Gunning to Mr. Rolleston, glancing at Lord Brotherton and Julia.

“ It looks likely ;” replied Mr. Rolleston briefly, turning to his hostess. “ Am I to congratulate you Mrs. Bradley on your eldest daughter’s becoming Lady Langfield ?”

“ Not yet—not quite yet ;—but his lordship does appear amazingly struck with Harriet’s beauty ; and she certainly is looking exceedingly well, dear girl ;—and so happy ! I was just wishing to consult you ; none of my children would think of forming a connection without your approbation ; regarding you as the head of our house.”

“ You make me of too much consequence, Mrs. Bradley ; I should never presume to interfere in your family concerns, being only a

cousin ; Mr. Bradley is the person to be consulted, not Mr. Rolleston."

"But Mr. Bradley is so thoughtless—so inconsequent ; that I always look to your opinion in matters of importance," continued the lady a little abashed, but still not silenced.

"The Cathcarts with Lord Brotherton, and Marshall, have agreed to join the water party on friday," said Mr. Bradley approaching at the moment.

"My dear, how can you be so inconsiderate?" replied his lady, her tones still soft ; but her eyes flashing ire. "We have already more than will fill a boat."

"Then we will have a second ; I like a large, gay party on such occasions."

"But how could you think of asking young Marshall?"

"Eliza said he might feel hurt if I did not, as every one else was going."

"Eliza say so?—that is the very reason why you should have left him out. Don't you

see that he is always talking to the girl if he can ; and that she encourages his attentions, notwithstanding my orders to the contrary ?”

“ Encourage attentions ? Wheugh ! I never thought of that.”

“ You never think of any thing ;” observed his wife provoked into sharpness. “ There, do go and keep them apart.”

“ Not I—let them come together ! Marshall is an old friend of mine ; and his son is a good, honest youth with no nonsense ; and a capital farmer.”

“ Capital farmer !” muttered Mrs. Bradley as her husband walked away. “ You see how it is Mr. Rolleston, I cannot make him understand that it is his duty to look out for good matches for his children. But to return to Lord Langfield, I wish to ask what character he bears in his county ; not that I would be very strait-laced as to a few youthful indiscretions ; but as a mother, of course, I should like to know what is thought of his lordship’s principles.”

“ He is a Viscount—uncontrolled master of estates some say to the value of eight, some ten thousand a year ; and is neither so clever, nor so self-willed, but that he may submit to your skilful guidance. What can a reasonable woman, and anxious mother desire more ? ”

“ Oh ! if you approve, Mr. Rolleston, I can have no further doubt on the subject ; and only wish Eliza had as fair a prospect. ”

“ Have you nothing eligible in view for Stephen ? Surely you do not overlook him in your maternal anxiety ? ”

“ I have hopes—I have wishes for him !—hopes that if fulfilled would make me the happiest of mothers ; but the subject is too delicate for me to touch on. I cannot interfere—he must work his own way,” replied Mrs. Bradley, delighted at Mr. Rolleston’s show of friendly feeling, and voluntarily, or involuntarily glancing towards Stephen and Grace, who were sitting together, though her son had more than

once entreated her not to intermeddle in his concerns by word, or look.

“ You are right ; Stephen requires no aid from you, having an eye always open to his own interest, and a hand ready to promote it.”

Mrs. Bradley was not quite so certain as she had been a moment before of Mr. Rolleston’s friendly feeling ; but hoped the best. The words were equivocal—the tone not pleasant—but Mr. Rolleston’s words had often a double meaning : and his voice was never musical.

Stephen Bradley was called across the room to speak to Mrs. Gunning ; and Grace was left alone with a book of prints open before her, in the examination of which she desired to be thought intent. A deep sigh caused her to turn round ; and she was startled on perceiving Ernest Dudley leaning on the back of the chair, which her cousin had so lately quitted.

“ Are you ill ?” she asked, struck by his look of suffering.

“ Not in body ;—but in mind—wretched—most wretched ;” he replied, glancing at Julia, and Lord Brotherton ; who were nearly opposite.

“ I am grieved—deeply grieved ; but you must make allowances. Can I—” faltered Grace, then stopped abruptly.

“ I thank you for your sympathy, though it only sharpens the pang. To-morrow shall decide my fate in one particular ; I am not a glove to be drawn on, or cast away at pleasure. Good night ; and should we meet no more—Heaven bless you ! I would save you from every pain.”

Before Grace could reply he was by Julia’s side, speaking to her in a low voice. She could not hear the words ; but his manner was lofty, and Julia’s sole reply was a haughty bow. Making his parting compliments as brief as politeness would permit Ernest quitted the room, and Julia after a pause of a few moments resumed her conversation with Lord Brotherton. If her answers to his remarks were not as com-

prehensible as usual, he made no comment on the difference.

“What strange things do come to pass in this world!” exclaimed Mr. Bradley, joining Grace. “Who would have thought of Ernest Dudley turning out such a noble looking person; and being Julia’s accepted lover, after her laughing so much at his verses? But stranger still, who would have thought of you, who certainly were at one time rather dull, and ungainly (you know I always speak the truth) becoming Mr. Rolleston’s heiress?”

“That would be a much stranger occurrence than the other two; but it has not yet come to pass, and never will. You look incredulous, cousin Bradley; but like yourself I am only speaking the plain truth; and will thank you to contradict the report, as Mr. Rolleston would be much annoyed should it reach his ears. I have his express authority for saying that I am not named in his will.”

“Ah! Gracey, very proper in you to say so;

but we have all eyes and ears. Would he watch your every movement as he does, and look so happy in your presence, so delighted when he hears you praised, if he did not intend to give you more than a dull home at Rolleston Court during his life? Would he who has foresworn society for years go about with you as he does, if you had not more influence over him than any one else in the world? Would he surround you with such luxury, and make you such handsome presents, if he meant to leave you a beggar at his death? If so, he is not acting justly, or kindly. Yes, yes, Gracey; you are to be his heiress, as all the world believes; and I am heartily glad to hear it."

"Come, Bradley, no more flirting with my niece, or your wife will have cause to be jealous," said Mr. Rolleston approaching at the moment. "I have been only waiting for the conclusion of your coquetterie to take my leave."

"You and my wife may say what you please,

but I will flirt with Grace whenever I can ; and hand her to the carriage now, in spite of you all," replied the laughing Bradley.

Grace made a last attempt to speak a word in private with her sister ; but Julia refused to second her endeavours.

" We are to join the party to Richmond on friday," said Mr. Rolleston to his niece, as they were driving home.

" Thank you, dear uncle ; but I would rather stay at home."

" It is my particular wish that you should go."

" Certainly, if you wish it."

This and one or two unimportant comments on the Cathcarts concluded the conversation ; as usual Mr. Rolleston made no remark on Lord Brotherton, Ernest, or Julia ; and Grace was in no mood for talking. She thought of Mr. Bradley's last remarks ; and she thought of the remarks of others.

CHAPTER III.

No sooner had Julia concluded her breakfast, a meal of pretence rather than reality, for she had not eaten the hundredth part of the roll placed on her plate, than she retired to her dressing-room, under the plea of writing letters. Her aunt made no observation ; but exchanged a significant glance with her husband. She had overheard Dudley's request to see Julia alone, and anticipated from his lofty manner, and the way in which Lord Brotherton's devotion had been received, a breaking off of the engagement with the former.

Once in her own room, free from all interruption, Julia thought no more of writing letters; but pondered over the events of the last evening, and the probable events of the present day. A low tapping at the door disturbed her reverie; and hastily opening her desk, and taking her seat at the table, supposing it to be her aunt, she bade her come in.

It was not Mrs. Gunning, but Grace Trevyllian; who started back with surprise and grief on perceiving the change which a few hours had wrought in the brilliant beauty of the previous night.

“Are you ill, dear Julia,” said Grace affectionately, bending down and kissing her brow.

“Most particularly well, my over anxious sister;” answered Julia with a cheek as ruddy as a country milkmaid’s; and an attempt at gaiety which could not have deceived the least observant. “I might ask the same of you Grace; for your eyes look as though they had

not been closed all night, and were sighing, i eyes can sigh, for sleep."

"If you did ask the same question, Julia, I should give a different answer. I am neither well nor happy; and can be neither, whilst I see you as you are."

"See me as I am? I flatter myself that I am not so hideous as to cause any one the megrims; and if you only came hither, my most sweet sister, to make rude remarks touching my appearance, I think you might as well have stayed away."

"I came to make kind, not rude remarks dear Julia," said her sister, taking a seat beside her on the sofa. "And first let me present you with this," clasping a bracelet on her wrist "You admired mine the other day, and I have had this one made exactly like it."

"You are a dear, good soul, Gracey, that is undeniable," said Julia, her eyes filling with tears, which she in vain strove to repress, "I cannot thank you as I should; for I am silly

this morning ; and if I once give way to the sentimental mood shall prove a perfect Niobe, and drown you in my tears. I am horridly nervous."

" You are unhappy, dear Julia ; and it is of this unhappiness that I would speak—if I might venture."

" Oh ! a lecture, Grace ! I hate lectures. If you meant this bracelet as a bribe to listen, take it back," said Julia with a gathering frown upon her polished brow.

" No, Julia, keep it. You cannot think I meant it as a bribe."

" I do not know what I think ;—I only know that I would be alone," exclaimed Julia abruptly.

" I cannot leave you as you are ;" said Grace in a low, sweet voice.

" As I am !—There again. You declared you were not come to say rude things ; but I suppose Annette has made such a fright of me this morning that you cannot refrain from remarking it."

“ No, no, Julia ; you are beautiful—most beautiful, despite your suffering ; more beautiful than any other I have ever seen ; but do not trifle with my anxiety ; your efforts to be gay pain you, and blind me not. Julia you are wretched—very wretched ; and so is he.”

“ You are complimentary, Grace ; but sisters are privileged to be uncivil. And who may this he be who shares your pity, and my wretchedness ?”

“ You know too well. Why risk his peace and yours ? If you had seen his agony last night whilst you were flirting with Lord Brotherton—if you had heard his tones so sad, and yet so resolute—you would have almost knelt to pray his pardon. How can you pain so kind, so generous a heart ?”

“ So Mr. Dudley complained of my conduct, requesting you to sound his praises, and to lecture me !” said Julia proudly, flushing with anger.

“ Mr. Dudley is above complaint ; and knows

nothing of my present visit. The blame, if you will blame my interference, must rest upon a sister's anxious love."

"And a young lady's desire for a coronet. I must not talk with Lord Brotherton it seems;—he is your property," said Julia sarcastically, walking to the window.

"Oh, sister, this from you!" exclaimed Grace reproachfully.

"And why not? Each for herself in this bustling world."

"You should know me better, Julia; and not use such cruel words. You cannot believe that I care for Lord Brotherton."

"How should I think otherwise? He cannot be civil to me, but you are jealous."

"Jealous! and jealous of Lord Brotherton! This is too much, Julia; I care nothing for him."

"Oh! then all your care is for Ernest Dudley—your paragon!—your beau ideal of perfection!—the man who can do no wrong! You

had better try to supplant me—it can be easily done;—Mr. Rolleston's heiress has attractions of which I cannot boast."

No answer was returned to this bitter and scornful speech; and as Julia's face had continued averted she could not tell the effect her words produced.

A choking sob smote on her ear;—she turned and rushed towards Grace, who had sunk back on the sofa with the wan look of a corpse.

"Grace! dear Grace! you are fainting! you are dying! good Heavens! what have I done! Forgive me—forget my cruel speech. I was not myself—I did not know what I said." exclaimed Julia wildly, emptying half a bottle of eau de Cologne that stood on the table over Grace's hands and face as she spoke.

Grace gasped for breath—opened her eyes and looked on her sister who was bending over her in great anxiety, chafing her icy hands.

"Speak to me! tell me that you are better!"

implored the terrified Julia, shrinking from her wild gaze.

“ Let me go !—I will stay here no longer. God forgive you for those cruel words,” said Grace in a hollow voice, putting her sister aside, and attempting to rise.

“ Oh, Grace, do not leave me ! and in anger ! I deserve all you say—all you can do ; but I am very miserable ; I have no friend save you ;—do not—oh ! do not leave me !” exclaimed Julia, throwing her arms round her sister’s neck, with a passionate burst of tears.

Grace could not resist this appeal ; and for some minutes the sisters wept in each other’s arms. The youngest was the first to speak, making no allusion to the insulting taunt addressed to herself, but referring solely to Julia’s assertion that she was very miserable.

“ Why are you so miserable, dear Julia, when you might be so happy ? Why not act more worthy of Mr. Dudley and yourself ?”

“ Because I am not like you, Grace—because

I am not worthy of Ernest's love," cried Julia looking up and speaking with a strange and startling vehemence. "Cradled in falsehood—nourished with flattery, till that nourishment became a poison, I cannot despise the galling remarks of those who reared me—I cannot silence the craving of that vanity which has made me what I am, and live without the admiration which has been my daily food for years. The luxuries and splendour that surround me have become absolute essentials to my being; and yet I condemn myself whilst I bow to the power of wealth and rank. I love Ernest Dudley above all beside—I can never love another as I love him, for respect and reverence are mingled with my affection; and yet to-day we shall part for ever—part in anger; and he will be free to wed another, who may make him happier than I can ever make him. I feel my own inferiority; but I cannot bear that he should feel it too. I deserve his reproaches—his contempt; but I can bear

neither with patience or humility. Such is my fate!—to see my sin—and yet sin on.”

“Think not so, dear Julia; say to him,—I have erred; and he will forgive—and not reproach you.”

“Say to him that I have erred! No, never!” exclaimed Julia rising abruptly and standing proudly before her sister. “No: I will be cold and stern as himself; and he shall never know—shall never guess how much our parting costs me. I will not stoop to be scorned—not plead to be spurned.”

“Oh, Julia, Julia! if you would have peace yourself—give peace to him; subdue this pride. What has it wrought but shame and woe?—what can it bring, but deeper sorrow still?”

“I know it!—but what then? I must abide my lot. I have lived on the world’s flatteries till I cannot endure the simple words of truth—till I almost hate the lips that utter them.”

“Hate me not, Julia, but listen to my prayers. By all our childish love, and the

affection of our later years—the love that would give life for life, and more—far more—by all these things I urge you to resist the tempter—to subdue that pride, and pray for power to withstand the daily lures of vanity. Call not up spirits to affright you, that have no being but in your fancy; Ernest Dudley will neither scorn nor upbraid you. Admit that you have erred—entreat him to forgive, and guide; and not a mother to her weeping child could be more gentle and more soothing. His very agony attests his love.”

“Love!—he loves me not!” exclaimed Julia bitterly. “You are blinded by your affection; you neither understand Ernest Dudley, nor Julia Trevyllian; you know us to be engaged; but you know not through what means. He looks not on me as I on him; I was the seeker—not the sought. And there you have the secret of my pride! I dare not be too humble, lest he should think me forward;—I listen to his changing tones—I look into his

glancing eyes, and read contempt in both ; and then I clothe myself in pride, to hide my shame and agony ; I wear a smiling face—none guess the aching heart. All bow before my beauty, whilst I bow down to pride, and shame, and vanity, and vain remorse. You shudder—you turn away, as though my presence were pollution ; and so would others if they knew all the truth—but I could bear it better from all else ; and yet from you do I deserve contempt the most—from you it is but just. Despise me!—that you must ;—upbraid me, if you will ; but oh ! put on the semblance of affection if you have it not ; and I will strive to bear your censure in humility.”

“ It is not for me, who should be bowed to earth with the thoughts of my own sin, to despise or upbraid you,” answered Grace meekly ; whilst the blood rushed back to cheek and lip, as she drew her sister to the seat beside her. “ Ask not for the semblance of affection, when the reality is yours. I was surprised,

amazed; even now I do not clearly comprehend; but I blame you not, and would judge kindly as I would be judged. Yet you—so beautiful!—your pride!”—she paused, not knowing how to word her questions.

“It was that very pride that wrought my shame; and gives that shame a keener edge to wound. I saw Ernest’s superiority; but I saw too that whilst others sought me, he stood aloof; whilst others owned the power of my beauty, he either saw it not, or saw it with a careless eye. I was piqued, and resolved to compel him to admiration. I divined the subjects on which he would fain converse; I appealed to his judgment—I deferred to his opinion; I spoke of—but no matter of what I spoke, enough that he rather sought than shunned my society. We were much together; and this was the issue of our frequent meeting: he looked on me as on a pleasant friend—whilst I—oh! Grace, despise me not!—I loved!”

“And you—you told him this?” questioned

her sister with a faltering voice, looking away that she might not see her blushes.

“No, no! I am not so degraded. I told him not; and he was blind, and did not see; wished not to learn, and did not guess; it was the doing of a friend unknown to me. We were staying at her house with others; my terror for his safety, awakened by a false report, betrayed my secret; and during the succeeding illness, fearful for my life, she told him all, and won upon his generous pity; so when we met, and I was strong enough to hear him speak, he spared my blushes, and my shame; and yet was candid—far too candid for my happiness. I should have been as generous—should have deserved his friendship, and declined his love; but I was selfish from my birth, or made so in my rearing; and thus received him as my future husband. You know or can well guess the rest.”

“Too candid for your happiness,” repeated Grace, as if the words dwelt strongly on her mind.

“Something of former fancied preference for another—one engaged to a friend, and who could never be his; but this matters not!” replied Julia impatiently, vexed at the admission, and consequent remark. “Had he sought me at first with eagerness I might have been more humble, more confiding, and less proud; instead of demanding a greater homage to convince me that I was not despised; and yet I am not sure of this; I might still have been moved by the glare of the coronet, the wearing taunts and sarcasms of those around me. And now I must be proud and wayward; for he demands a private interview; and then we part in anger, or in seeming coldness,” added Julia, burying her face in her clasped hands.

“But he has loved you since—has he not?” said Grace in tremulous tones.

“Oh, yes! despite my pride and vanity, he loves me now, though I deserve not his regard.”

There was a silence of some minutes, and then Julia ventured to look into her sister’s

face. Its expression was sad—very sad ; there were no tears, the sorrow seemed too deep for tears ; and yet there was a gentleness in that expression which encouraged confidence ; and Julia whispered—whispered lest any other ear should catch the words :

“ We must part, Grace,—must we not ? You will not advise me to submit, since you know all.”

“ No ; you must not part,” said Grace, roused by this address, yet avoiding the speaker’s eye. “ At least not part in anger, or in coldness ; his generosity demands an equal generosity from you. Meet him in meekness ; say that you have erred, and why ; you need but hint at this, for true affection is quick-sighted ; then set him free from all engagement ; and you will merit his esteem, if he deny you more—which he will not.”

“ Oh, Grace ! I cannot tell him this. How can I speak, whilst his keen eye is on me ? I shall die with shame.”

“You wronged him, Julia ; and must make amends. Think of what you have made him bear.”

“Mr. Dudley is in the second drawing-room, ma’am ;” said the servant through the closed door, his former knock having been unheeded.

“Very well,” was Grace’s answer. Julia clung to her sister, who trembled beneath her touch.

“I cannot go, dear Grace, I will write.”

“You must go,” said Grace decidedly. I will bring you some sal volatile ; and leave you five minutes to compose yourself, and pray for strength above your own.”

“Now, dearest, you must go,” said Grace returning after the five minute’s absence, putting her arm round her sister’s neck and kissing away her tears.

Julia did not speak ; but received her sister’s caress with mingled remorse and gratitude ; there were thoughts in her heart which she

dared not reveal, lest they should rob her of the affection of one, whom at that moment she regarded as her guardian angel.

“Come with me to the door, Grace.”

Grace hesitated, but only for an instant ; then arm in arm the sisters descended to the second drawing-room.

“I dare not enter alone,” faltered the trembling Julia, not a trace of her former pride perceptible. “But I see you despise my weakness—you shrink from my touch.”

“Not so ; I will do as you desire,” replied her sister, entering the room with Julia clinging to her arm.

Ernest, who was seated fronting the door, rose as it opened ; but started on perceiving that Julia was not alone.

He advanced a pace—then stopped abruptly, with a glowing cheek, whilst the sisters approached in silence, and with dowcast eyes. As they gained the centre of the apartment, he held out his hand to Grace, wishing her good

morning, with a proud, yet troubled look.

Gently drawing forward the blushing Julia, her sister placed her hand in his, saying as she did so, striving to smile:—"Here is a penitent, with whom you will not deal hardly."

The hand that had been placed in his trembled at his touch, though he pressed it not. He looked at Grace; but she was looking on her sister; he turned to Julia, and met her eyes half raised to his. Who could resist that timid, pleading look? Not one who had ever loved; and the murmured words that fell on Grace's ear as she glided from the room told of the reconciliation of the lovers.

And they were reconciled by her! A sudden gleam of triumph shot across her pallid face; and then she pressed her hand upon her heart smote by some sudden pain.

"I have just met Dudley walking with Julia, looking as if he had found a mislaid jewel," observed Mr. Rolleston to Grace, finding her

alone in the drawing-room on his return from a drive, in which she had declined to accompany him on some reasonable plea.

“Did you,” replied his niece indifferently.

“Did you! Is that all you mean to say?” questioned her uncle sharply.

“What more would you have me say?”

“Nothing; your brevity, and the absence of all wonder proves the correctness of my suspicions.”

His niece did not enquire what he suspected; so, after a silence of some moments, he spoke again.

“I have grown very avaricious of late, Grace.”

“Only since this morning then,” she replied pointing to some ornaments with which he had lately presented her.

“Psha! child; you know nothing of human nature. Where is the mortal who is consistent? A tyrant is not a merciful man, because he spares one enemy out of a thousand;

and a miser is no less a miser because he gratifies one extravagant whim ; the wise may think that only adding folly to avarice. I do not grudge a few pounds on a present to you ; but I do grudge four hundred pounds per annum to Mrs. Dudley ; so, as a dutiful niece, I insist on your not again interfering in these lovers' quarrels."

"I have no intention of again interfering," said Grace, confused by his observations.

"That very declaration admits that you have interfered, in spite of my warnings."

"I could not bear to see Julia unhappy," stammered Grace.

"So you have coaxed her to say—'I have been very naughty, but will never do so any more'—and persuaded Dudley to believe her protestations of future goodness. Nay, you have done this twice. What happiness can be expected after marriage with such serious disagreements, such jealousy, and cause for jealousy, before ? Julia would flirt with a hop-pole, if there were nothing else to flirt with ;

ay, and wed it, if gilded and crowned with a coronet, whilst Dudley is one of your dreamers of female truth, and yet too lofty to be any woman's slave. No one but you could have subdued the pride of the one, and the vanity of the other; but even you must feel that to interfere a third time could promote the happiness of neither."

"I shall never be called on to interfere again," replied his niece, who could not deny the justice of his remarks.

"Umph! that is as it may be."

"Then suppose you take me back to Rolleston, out of the way of temptation."

"What! are you tired of London?" asked her uncle, fixing his keen eyes full upon her; for there were some parts of his niece's conduct that puzzled his penetration.

"Oh, yes! I am a country girl, you know; and was never intended for a town lady."

"Have patience, Gracey; I expect to see strange things ere long."

CHAPTER IV.

THERE are some grumblers who assert that it always rains at a pic-nic, or a party of pleasure; and with such persons it is of no use to argue,—

“ For men compelled against their will,
Are of the same opinion still.”

They must grumble at something, so they may as well grumble at the climate as at the taxes; perhaps better in the opinion of the Chancellor of the Exchequer; so we will leave such to enjoy their gloomy belief, only insisting that

the day fixed for the excursion to Richmond was an exception to the general rule.

Never was a finer day than this very friday in June. No raven croaked of rain—no prosy preacher moralised of change ; all was bright and joyous, as if what then was, had ever been and ever would be.

“ The blue sky always blue,
The green earth always green.”

Who whilst gazing on the rich summer foliage could think of cold, stern winter with its leafless trees and glittering icicles ? Who whilst smiled on by the summer sun, fanned by the summer breeze, could dream of cloudy skies and howling storms ? None. And it was thus with the joyous party that passed up the stately Thames.

“ Youth at the prow, and pleasure at the helm,
Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
That hush'd in grim repose, expects his evening prey.”

On swept the boats with smile, and jest,
and merry laugh, and dearer things beside ;

for there was thoughtless youth, that knows no care; and hearts that felt the touch, the thrill of sympathy, to whom a desert would not have seemed lonely had they but shared the waste together. Theirs was a troubled anxious joy unlike the joy of younger years, the thoughtless glee of childhood's hours; and yet a joy, that troubled as it was, they would not yield for all a monarch's power—a statesman's calm.

On swept the boat, and oh! with what a freight of human hopes and fears, and thoughts and feelings! thoughts which might fill large tomes;—feelings of which no mortal pen or pencil could depict the bright, and varying hues—the softness and the strength.

The party had become so large, owing, in some measure, to Mr. Bradley's kind hospitality, that it filled two boats to the annoyance of some, and the pleasure of others. Not that the annoyance was visible, for all wore company looks as well as company clothes;—

and if we meet a smiling face, why ask if it conceal an aching heart ?

Lord Brotherton, much to his own vexation, was detained by important business ; but no one expressed or seemed to feel regret at his absence, except Mr. Rolleston and the Gunnings.

These three were in the first boat, as well as Julia and Dudley ; she looking more beautiful than ever, an air of timid softness endowing her with new and irresistible attractions.

She was no longer the conscious beauty demanding homage ; but the gentle, blushing woman, rather shrinking from, than courting general admiration ; too blessed in the regard of one, to sigh for the applause of hundreds. Whether Lord Brotherton's presence would have wrought a change in her manner could not be ascertained, as she was not subject to the trial ; but as it was, even her stern uncle could not look upon her quite unmoved, and

ceased to wonder at Grace's over fond affection and Ernest's long forbearance with her vanity and wayward fancies.

In the same boat were Mrs. Bradley and her eldest daughter, both looking especially pleased, as Lord Langfield was between them, paying a lover-like devotion to the young lady, and a respectful attention to the mamma; and yet that mamma would occasionally cast an anxious glance at the second skiff in which was Eliza seated, by her father's connivance, next to young Marshall; and looking to the full as happy as her sister.

Mr. Rolleston had intended that Grace should occupy the same boat with himself; but owing to some little confusion at the embarkation, and Stephen's contrivance, his purpose was defeated; and Grace sat between Mr. Bradley and his son.

It would be useless to name the rest of the party, which we have already said was large; so instead of long old fashioned introduction

we will only add that the two boats passed gaily on their way and reached the appointed landing place sooner than some of that joyous company desired. The scene of the day's pleasure was a villa on the banks of the Thames, the property of a friend of Mr. Gunning's now abroad ; and orders having been previously despatched all things were ready for the reception of the expected visitors.

It was a lovely retreat that villa !—shaded by clustering creepers, and beautiful shrubs, standing in the middle of a well arranged flower garden, the windows looking across a verdant lawn that sloped towards the water, and terminated in a terrace that overhung it.

The first party having landed in safety sauntered towards the house, all but Mr. Rolleston, Julia, and Ernest, who stood on the terrace waiting for Grace. The second boat ran close up to the bank ; and the gentlemen, with the exception of Bradley and his son who were quite at the stern, stepped on

shore, or lingered to assist the rest in disembarking. Lady after lady passed safely and quietly from the boat to the steps ; and there only remained Grace Trevyllian and Miss Hanwell, a pretty girl of about eighteen, with more wealth than wit, and higher spirits than breeding. Willing to shew her grace and agility, for the benefit of a certain Captain Talbot, who had shewn some genius for flirtation, Miss Hanwell, instead of stepping quietly from the boat to the landing place, as all the others had done, attempted to spring on shore from one of the benches ; but, failing in the endeavour, would have fallen on her face had she not been caught by a gentleman whose assistance she had before declined.

Miss Hanwell suffered no other injury from her hoydenish folly than a slight sprain ; but Grace, who was standing up ready to follow, was thrown into the water by the shock caused by her only half-averted fall ; whilst Mr. Bradley, who had been beside her, fell

across the edge of the boat, half in, half out of the river, endangering all by his violent efforts to regain his feet.

Julia uttered a loud scream, which was echoed by many, some who were aware of what had occurred, some who were not; whilst Mr. Rolleston rushed towards the steps with frantic speed.

Stephen Bradley was no swimmer, and no hero of romance; he would never have thought of risking his own life to save another; but he had sense and self-possession, which in moments of danger are sometimes of more essential service than even heroism itself. With one hand he dragged his still struggling father into the skiff, and with the other seizing a boat hook, stood prepared to catch at Grace's clothes when she should rise to the surface; and so prompt was he in thought and act, that she had not risen after her sudden immersion, before he was ready to assist her. There was one circumstance however which he had

not considered ; the current was strong, and when she rose it was some paces lower down, beyond the reach of his hook ; but ere the boat could be pushed off to her succour, Dudley, who had plunged into the river from the terrace, almost at the same instant with Grace's scream, had his arm twined round her waist, and was swimming with her towards the shore. His passionate exclamations of joy as he caught the frightened girl were too low to meet any ear but hers, or Stephen Bradley's ; possibly even she did not hear or comprehend them ; for though she looked upon him once, her eyes closed on the instant ; and when Mr. Rolleston received his niece from her preserver, she was perfectly insensible.

To convey her to the villa, place her in a warm bed, and send for surgical assistance was soon accomplished ; but short as had been her submersion it was long before she was

sufficiently restored to understand with clearness what had occurred.

“Dear Grace ! I am so happy to see you yourself again ! I shall love Ernest a thousand times better than ever for saving you,” whispered Julia, with streaming eyes, bending over the bed to kiss her sister’s pallid cheek. But Grace turned from the caress, and put her away with her hand crying ;—“ Go ! Go !”

“My patient must be left alone to benefit by my composing draught, she is not yet quite herself,” remarked the medical man, who with Mr. Rolleston was standing near.

“I fear not indeed ;” said Julia shocked and pained by her wild look, and seeming aversion.

“She must see no one, who can interest or agitate her. I will watch her waking ; and let you know,” added Mr. Penson.

So Grace was left to herself, for her doctor

was hid from her view by the curtains ; and her sister and uncle went to the drawing-room to renew their thanks to Dudley, which had before been brief and hurried ; but Dudley, after hearing that Grace was restored to consciousness, had set off for a friend's house at a little distance to procure a change of clothes from whence he did not return for two or three hours ; and then showed a great dislike to being thanked, asserting, what was a fact, that being an excellent swimmer he had encountered no risk, and should scarcely have expected an acknowledgment had he done the same for a lap dog.

Even Julia admitted that he seemed ungracious, though she did not appear inclined to resent it ; but Mr. Rolleston was seriously displeased at his careless manner.

Thanks to Mr. Penson's composing draught or some previous watchful nights, Grace fell into a sound sleep, from which she awoke calm and refreshed, to the gratification of her

medical attendant, who soon after admitted Mr. Rolleston ; but excluded Julia, fearing that her presence might again agitate his patient.

“ My poor child ! thank Heaven, that you are safe ;” said Mr. Rolleston taking her burning hand in his, with all the fondness of a father.

Grace kissed that caressing hand, looking up in his face with an expression which brought tears into those cold, keen eyes ; yet he could not quite comprehend the expression. Was it only the tenderness with which we gaze on that from which we have been well nigh parted ? or, an agonised appeal for sympathy from a torn and outraged heart, that had none else to look to ?

“ I should like to go back to town directly, dear uncle ;” said Grace with eagerness ; “ but not by water !” she added with a shudder. “ I am quite strong now ; but cannot feel composed till I have left this house ; every little noise alarms me ; and if I were away the rest

of the party would enjoy themselves more freely," she continued seeing that Mr. Rolleston looked grave at her request.

"I think, sir, you had better comply with the young lady's wish," said Mr. Penson in reply to an appealing glance, for he was one who studied to calm the mind, as well as to ease the body; and saw that his patient's heart was set on an immediate removal.

"So be it then; and I will send Julia to sit with you, whilst I make the requisite arrangements."

"No, no, dear uncle; keep Julia away, I must see no one—mind, no one," she added more earnestly. "I have strange wild thoughts in my mind, and fearful visions before my eyes; my head too is not right. I feel as if I should go mad were I to see any one—keep them all—all away, dear uncle."

Mr. Rolleston turned with alarm from the fever-flushed cheek of his niece to Mr. Penson.

"My patient is as skilful a doctor as myself;

and knows what is best for her," replied that gentleman with a relieving smile.

A carriage was soon procured, and Grace, dressed in a suit of clothes supplied by the woman left in charge of the house, stepped into it, followed by her uncle, without having seen any other of the party, whilst, at her particular desire, Mr. Penson was requested to continue his attendance, his quiet, gentlemanly manners and ready compliance with her wishes having rendered him an especial favorite.

Grace bore her silent journey, for she never spoke, without the appearance of fatigue ; yet with all Mr. Penson's zeal and ability, and he exhibited both, she recovered the shock but slowly ; and was not completely herself at the end of a fortnight, though she no longer excluded visitors, or remained in her dressing-room. During the whole of this period Mr. Rolleston had watched over her with the care and solicitude of an affectionate parent ; and Julia had shown a sisterly anxiety, spending a

portion of every day in her society, her time being less occupied than usual, owing to Mrs. Gunning's confinement to the house with a severe cold; and the absence of Dudley, who had left town early on the morning succeeding the accident, to attend his mother, who was not expected to survive the week.

By Mr. Penson's advice the party to Richmond was rarely referred to in the presence of Grace; who shuddered and turned pale at the most distant allusion, as she did on her first meeting with Julia and the Bradleys; but finding that the subject was never touched on, she gradually recovered health and composure, though the first was by no means so completely re-established as to content her uncle's anxiety.

"You are still looking very ill, Grace; and it is on my conscience having compelled you to join that party. What say you to trying change of air?" said Mr. Rolleston some few

days after her re-appearance in the drawing-room.

"It is just what I was wishing," answered Grace, speaking with greater animation than she had exhibited since the accident.

"Suppose we take a tour in Derbyshire, and then on to the lakes, as you have seen neither."

"With pleasure, dear uncle ; and the sooner the better. I never was meant for a town lady, and shall feel gayer and stronger when again in the country."

"This is monday—can you be ready by thursday?"

"Yes, uncle ; quite ready."

"Quite ready for what?" inquired Julia entering at the moment.

"A tour ; to win for Grace a bloom as rich as yours, though you have been looking but pale of late."

"Relations are never complimentary," remarked Julia with a smile—but not a happy smile.

That fatal party had brought care to more than one young heart ; and though the sisters had been much together since, and Julia had acquitted herself well as a nurse ; both felt that there was not the open and unrestrained intercourse of former days. Sometimes their eyes would meet, and then be suddenly averted ; but no cold or unkind word was breathed by either. Under such circumstance each felt that a temporary separation would be a relief.

“But you will visit town again next year?” said Julia to her uncle.

“Yes ; so do your spiriting this season, for I intend Grace to win all the hearts [and coronets then disengaged,” said Mr. Rolleston as he left the room.

Nor did Julia linger long, having commissions to execute and visits to pay.

CHAPTER V.

FEW showed more anxiety for Grace's recovery than Viscount Brotherton. The daily inquiry was never forgotten; and when visitors were admitted he was one of the first to congratulate the invalid on her amendment.

“Am I to believe the report that has reached me? Can you really be going to quit town on thursday?” questioned his lordship eagerly, on entering the room where Grace was sitting alone, the day after the one on which her departure had been fixed.

"For once report speaks truth, my lord," she replied with indifference, resuming the work on which she had been employed.

"How can you answer it to your conscience thus to drive hundreds to despair, making of this splendid city a lonely desert?"

"These are awful accusations, my lord; but really I have no intention of committing such enormous wickedness."

"Then you will remain."

"Excuse me; my uncle, and Mr. Penson prescribe change of air. I am but a poor nervous creature still."

"I had hoped your amendment was certain, and would now be rapid; by departing you leave the city desolate—her sons despairing."

"Desolate cities! and despairing sons! Your lordship is talking poetry this morning," remarked Grace with a smile.

"No; I am talking plain prose—down right matter of fact, Miss Trevyllian. When you have departed this will be to me as a desolate

city ! one on which ruin has set her mark—on which the sun shines not ;—the soul the spirit of her people gone.”

Grace laughed at his rhapsody.

“ How very kind of your lordship to indulge my humour for the romantic, and sentimental. I have not been addressed in such lofty strains since the death of a mad Italian poet I knew at Florence ; who, like some others of his craft, occasionally confounded the sublime and the ridiculous.”

“ You laugh at the pangs you cause, Miss Trevyllian ; mock at the lamentations your absence awakens.”

“ On the contrary, I will prescribe for the malady. Flirt all day—dance all night ; or should flirting, balls and operas, fail, a visit to the gay city of Paris ; no one can die of the sentimentals there.”

“ Rather let me follow you to the lakes.”

“ Oh no ! that could only increase the malady.”

“ You are cruel.”

“ Only a skilful leech, dealing kindly with a hypochondriac. Throw off this humour, my lord, and be yourself again ; sentiment is not your forte.”

“ You are truly barbarous !” exclaimed the viscount laughing to hide his vexation, though half inclined to set down her remarks to pique at his late devotion to Julia. “ There was I in a poetical mood—a rather rare occurrence for me,—and you have jested away all my romance, and ideality ; destroying my hopes of out doing Byron.”

“ You ought to be grateful to me for dispelling such an illusion ; the real poet feels, not feigns ; you would feign, not feel. Depend upon it, my lord, the Gods never made you poetical ; and by assuming the character, like the poet in Schiller’s beautiful apologue, you would lose your share of earth ; but unlike him, obtain no heavenly portion.”

“ You are philosophical this morning, Miss

Trevyllian ; but I cannot feel grateful to you for dispelling a beautiful illusion, and leaving me no hope of that said heavenly portion. What will you give me instead ?”

“ You will find enough to content you in the world’s applause.”

“ Give me your approval ; and the fulfilment of one hope—I require no more ;” exclaimed Lord Brotherton with sudden animation.

“ Success is not mine to bestow ; and my approval may not follow the world’s ; or is too worthless to be counted a good,” replied Grace with as sudden a gravity.

“ Let me be your knight ! let me wear your colours, and I will conquer or —”

“ Fail !” interposed Grace quickly.

“ I am not wont to fail ;” said his lordship proudly, unable to conceal his vexation.

“ The very certainty of conquest may bring defeat, causing too great a confidence.”

“ Do you think me too confident, Miss Trevyllian ?”

“ Pardon me, my lord ; I dislike personalities, and must therefore decline discussing your character. Will you give me your opinion of that print ?” pointing to one on the table before him.

“ Rather let me give my opinion of this !” exclaimed his lordship, seizing her miniature, taken at Mr. Rolleston’s request, which was lying beneath the print.

“ No, no ; my dislike to personalities has increased a thousand-fold at the bare idea. Restore it to me,” she added, colouring at his earnest manner.

“ Hope it not ! I shall now take revenge for your late cruelty, and criticise as would a critic ;—

“ Who himself is sore.”

“ So must it be then, since you will show no mercy. I have been too long called the Fright to dread the name.”

“ Fright ! you cannot suppose I should call

you that?" said his lordship with a strong emphasis upon the pronoun.

"Oh! no my lord; not me—only my picture;—you were ever polite."

He looked at her doubtingly; then marking a slight confusion resolved to try his fate.

"It is a lovely miniature; not only in execution, but in expression. Those eyes so lustrous—yet so soft;—that noble brow, and then that look of sweet, and quick intelligence. The gazer's heart is gone whilst bending over it;—its future hopes and fears—its very life all pending on the fiat of those coral lips. Yet there is one thing wanting in my eyes to make it perfect."

"There are a thousand wanting in mine, my lord. It is a piece of painted flattery, which, but for my uncle's prohibition, should be thrown behind the fire."

"No flattery, sweet Grace; and wanting only one thing to be perfect. Instead of the

simply braided hair, that brow should have a coronet. Will you not let me place one there? It would become it well!"

"For once your lordship is deficient in good taste;—a coronet would ill befit that brow; and you will agree with me in this opinion when you hear that the lady is not, as you suppose, Mr. Rolleston's heiress."

It was the viscount's turn to start and pause at an avowal so open, so uncalled for by his words; so clearly demanded by his thoughts.

"You think me mercenary;" he said after a little hesitation.

"I think a continuance of this conversation can advantage neither; let us talk of other things. Was the opera good on saturday?"

The man of the world was daunted, confounded by a simple girl, who knew little of that world, by which he was so honored. Her vanity was not to be worked on, as he had hoped; her present coldness was not the

result of pique or caprice;—she understood his character, and despised it.

Dashing the miniature on the table, he strode to the window, unable to control his vexation; but unwilling to afford her the triumph of perceiving it.

He knew little of Grace Trevyllian;—she could not triumph in another's pain or discomfiture.

A thundering knock announced the arrival of fresh visitors;—his Lordship resumed his seat by Grace, discoursing as gaily as on their first acquaintance; and when he took his leave not one of those visitors entertained a suspicion that Viscount Brotherton was writhing under the mortification of a refusal.

“Have you a fancy for a coronet Grace?” asked Mr. Rolleston on returning from his drive.

“None whatever;” replied his niece, a little surprised at the question.

“That is fortunate, Lord Sellmore has been descanting on the policy of a union between Viscount Brotherton, and the heiress of Rolleston Court; but I doubt if he would see any policy in a union between Viscount Brotherton and Grace Trevyllian, with only a portion of a few hundreds. Perhaps the son may have been hinting to the niece what the father has been hinting to the uncle,” he added, perceiving some little confusion, and remembering that he had met his lordship riding furiously, like a man in a rage.

“I never tell tales,” replied Grace with a blush, which confirmed his suspicions.

“As you please: I can comprehend a riddle without hearing the solution.”

His niece might have hoped and thought that he was less wise than he imagined; but she was too polite to say so: and finding that she made no remark, Mr. Rolleston continued.

“If the youngest won’t, the eldest will ;

and he is a wise man who has two strings to his bow."

"He is not an honourable one!" exclaimed Grace indignantly.

Mr. Rolleston laughed, and the subject was dropped.

Stephen Bradley was an early visitor on the morrow, bringing a book which Grace had expressed a wish to see; and not only an early but also an agreeable visitor, and one who seemed to entertain no dread of wearying by his stay; for when Mr. Rolleston drove into the city on business he still remained, watching the progress of his cousin's drawing, or looking over her portfolio.

"Here is a sketch of Elmwood Lodge," he exclaimed with glee. "An exquisite sketch, too!—so free, and yet so exact;—a copy of nature—an original in art. Windows, chimneys, shrubs, even your favourite's grave; and all to the very life. I must coax you to

bestow this sketch on me, most dear Grace—most kind-hearted of cousins.”

“Flattery! flattery! flattery! ah Stephen! when will you seek the advancement of your own fortunes by nobler means than encouraging the evil propensities of others?” replied Grace with an admonishing tone.

“Why, my dear moral cousin, the world could never go on if all were to be blunt and straightforward; its machinery would come to a stand-still within twelve hours.”

“Has the experiment ever been tried?”

“Sufficiently to draw a correct conclusion. Is not sincerity tabooed by genteel society?—is not the man who professes it shunned by all? And must not general opinion be founded on truth?—must not the majority rule?”

“It has been said;—‘Follow not a multitude to do evil.’”

“I would do no evil; I would only keep people in good humour, and save them from the sin of losing their tempers. It is very

naughty to be cross, you know, I would only give others pleasure ; and all smile at praise, and frown at censure. Even your great saints who make a talk of their utter sinfulness, look askance at those who accuse them of only a trifling peccadillo."

"Do not speak irreverently, Stephen ; our anger at rebuke is matter for sorrow, not for jest ; if we really deplored our sinfulness as we should, those rebukes would be borne with more humility ; but he who wilfully wanders from the strait path is on the high road to destruction ; whilst he who is only carried away by temptation, and the imperfection of his nature, though he may go astray for a little while, we have reason to hope will see his error and return."

"You need not speak so gravely, cousin mine ; we were discussing manners, and not morals."

"I would have the former founded on the latter, Stephen."

“Moral manners! Oh, by all means! To begin; I accuse you of being uncharitable in your judgment. I may flatter others; but I have never flattered you;—the tongue has said less than the heart has felt.”

“You will excuse my rising to make a courtesy, Stephen; and content yourself with a bow for that pretty speech,” said his laughing cousin.

“I will excuse any thing, but a disbelief of the sincerity of my regard.”

“Then please to prove that regard by putting down my exquisite sketch, instead of tearing it to pieces, as you seem inclined to do in absence or on purpose.”

“Then this sketch is dear to you?”

“Yes, very dear.”

“For whose sake?” he questioned eagerly.

“For the sake of your father, and dear old Frolic. I shall never forget the unvarying kindness of the former, nor the fidelity of the

latter ; there is his grave, you see, in the foreground."

Stephen looked a little disconcerted at this last remark ; then observed abruptly, looking keenly at his cousin as he spoke.

" Henry is at Paris, very gay, very happy, and very much devoted to a Miss Liston ! who has wealth, beauty, &c. &c."

" I am very glad to hear it," replied Grace with an arch smile.

" And I rejoice to hear you say so, since it removes a fear which has often caused me pain."

" A groundless fear ; and not a very painful pain I suspect, cousin Stephen."

" You are wrong—very wrong in the last ; I have suffered much. But you will give me this sketch—will you not ?" he continued more earnestly.

" No, not that !" she said taking it from him. " Poor Frolic's grave would not awaken pleasing recollections ;—you shall have this instead,"

presenting him with one to the full as well executed.

She wished to spare him unpleasant recollections ! His hopes rose high. “ And you will give me this dear Grace, thanks ! thanks ! a thousand thanks ! Yet, beggar as I am, I must entreat for more. Will you not give me the hand that traced it ? Will you not in return accept the devotion of one, who lives but in your smiles.”

“ Say no more ;” exclaimed Grace indignantly, withdrawing the hand which he would have taken. “ You are wasting your eloquence, for I am not my uncle’s heiress ; and you should not imagine that I who have known you from a boy can believe you capable of a sincere affection for ‘ the Fright,’ with only a dowry of six hundred pounds.”

“ The fright ! Oh Grace, how have I hated myself for using that hateful word ;” exclaimed the lover discouraged, but not turned from his purpose.

“ I can believe that you have done so since the last few months ; but if that were your only sin towards me, you need feel little remorse.”

“ Alas ! Alas ! Grace, it is not my only sin. Many a weary day, and many a sleepless night have I mourned my cruelty to you ;—cruelty which you cannot and will not forgive. I was a wretch—and deserve your reproaches.” he added in a despairing tone, covering his face with his hands, whilst his breast heaved convulsively.

Grace looked upon him with doubt and suspicion. He was an admirable actor ; but she had much of her uncle’s penetration, and all the recollections of her childhood were against him.

“ Let the past be forgotten ;” she said after a minute’s silence.

“ And forgiven ? May I believe such happiness is mine ?” he exclaimed in transports of joy.

“ Yes ;” answered Grace indifferently.

“ And the future ?” he asked with increasing tenderness.

“ Oh ! for the future—we shall see little of each other ; and you will never be rude to any one under the protection of Mr. Rolleston of Rolleston Court.”

“ Ah, Grace ! this is neither forgetfulness, nor forgiveness,” exclaimed her cousin passionately.

“ Yes ; entire forgiveness for the past ; and forgetfulness—as far as lies in my power.”

“ Ah ! that hateful reservation—as far as lies in your power. You allow the conduct of the boy to prejudice you against the man ;—you think of me now as you thought of me years ago ;—you will not see how your influence has changed me.”

“ How can I believe you changed, when I see you day after day fawning on the rich and great, scorning the poor and humble ;—toiling to advance yourself, let others suffer as they

may. You have sought the praise of the many, and you have it; but never ask for my esteem—you have it not. You have pointed out my sister's faults to Mr. Rolleston—you have sought to widen the separation between him and my parents;—I forgive all the wrong you did to me; but I cannot forget that you have wronged those I love.”

“ You are mistaken—blinded by prejudice. I have done none of these things,” exclaimed her cousin with considerable vehemence; but he shrank from her gaze.

Grace shook her head; and made no reply.

“ You will not believe me—you do not wish to believe me. Careless of my sufferings, you speak with harshness.”

“ I have no wish to pain you, Stephen; but you compel me to plain language.”

“ Say not so, Grace; say not so. I would win you to love, not compel you to bitterness;—I would devote to you my every thought—my whole existence.”

“ Spare me and yourself all further entreaty,” said Grace coldly.

“ Then you despise—you reject my love.”

“ I despise your hypocrisy ;—you love me not.”

“ And is it thus you destroy the hopes, awakened by your own gentle, and affectionate manner ?” demanded Stephen with a mingling of reproach and tenderness.

“ My manner has fostered no such hopes ; and that you know,” exclaimed Grace indignantly. “ You may say this to further your own mercenary views ; but you have always felt that instead of desiring your attentions, I have only submitted to them from regard to your father ; and never before have you dared to hint at those hopes, which you now pretend I encouraged. In vain would you seek to deceive me ;—the man is what the boy was.”

“ You shall repent of this !” muttered her cousin, looking fiercely on her, whilst his face turned white with rage.

Grace felt a deadly fear creep over her ; but struggling against the weakness she resumed her drawing, though unsteady lines denoted her emotion.

After pacing the room with hurried strides, Stephen Bradley reseated himself; and taking up a pencil began to draw, so placing the paper, that the subject of his design was only visible to himself. He was a quick and clever sketcher; and by a few lines could convey what might be called the moral of the design with a clearness and force often wanting in more elaborate performances. His present task was soon completed.

“ You have given me a sketch, fair coz ; let me return the favor,” he said, placing his sketch before her.

His voice was not loud ; yet there was that in its intonation which caused another deadly chill to creep across his hearer ; but rallying her courage she looked at the drawing.

In the foreground was a female figure, young

and graceful ; the left hand laid upon her heart, as if to stay its beating ; the other held by one of a commanding presence, whose knee was bent before her ; and from whose ardent, pleading look, her face was half averted—not in anger—not in coldness ; but with a timid, yet confiding love. In the background stood another female figure, more lovely, and as graceful, gazing intently on these two, who thinking only of each other marked not her presence. Her hands were raised in wonder ; and her beauty marred by an expression of horror, and despair. The whole attitude betokened one stricken and crushed, by some sudden shock—some almost incredible act of perfidy. The feelings of each were admirably depicted—the most unobservant could not have been mistaken ; nor was the resemblance doubtful. She who stood in front, her hand clasped in that of her kneeling lover, was Grace Trevyllian ; and she in the background—the victim of perfidy—was Julia.

“I am avenged!” cried Stephen grasping his cousin’s wrist to compel her to gaze on; but he was also alarmed, when he saw the subject of his unmanly violence sink back with the livid hue of a corpse.

“Forgive me, Grace; no other eye shall look on this!” he exclaimed in terror, tearing the drawing into a thousand pieces. “Speak to me! say you forgive me!”

The sole reply was a faint gurgling in the throat.

He dared not summon assistance; but the luncheon had been placed in the next room, and thither he rushed for a glass of water.

On his return he found his cousin somewhat better.

He would have held the glass to her lips, but she waved him away with a gesture of disgust; and rising with difficulty walked slowly towards the door.

Her steps were unsteady, and her face still

of a deathly paleness ; but there were no tears in her eyes, and she uttered no reproach.

Throwing himself in her way he knelt before her.

“ Grace ! dear Grace ! leave me not without one word ! Upbraid ! reproach me ! anything but this disdainful silence. Say you forgive me ! ”

His cousin would have passed on without speaking ; but he snatched at her dress, though she drew back from his touch, and detained her.

“ Grace,” he began in a low hollow whisper that thrilled his hearer ; “ if you suffer thus because I only know the truth—what would you suffer should the whole world know it ? ”

She shuddered ; but made no reply.

“ Be mine, love ! and none shall guess the truth. I will give no hint—I will shield you from every suspicion. Only be mine, and my whole life shall be devoted to make you happy.”

“Never!” exclaimed his cousin with a look in which all the disdain and contempt that the human heart could feel appeared concentrated, as tearing her robe from his grasp she swept past him with a lofty air, leaving him crouching and cowering beneath her scorn.

The door had closed after her many minutes before he was sufficiently recovered from that scathing glance to understand the necessity of assuming a composure which he did not feel. He had no desire that the truth should be guessed by any.

He rose—replaced the tumbler in the adjoining room—swallowed a glass of wine—put on his gloves—took up his hat, and descended the stairs with a steady step, and careless mien; but there was hatred in his heart.

CHAPTER VI.

So much was Grace Trevyllian benefitted by her tour, extended far beyond the original intention, that on her return to Rolleston towards the end of October, she had lost all claim to the character of invalid. If her cheeks showed not the full bloom of perfect health, they had a faint and delicate tint; whilst her eyes no longer wore the dull and leaden look of sickness and of suffering.

“I do not know what you may think, Miss Grace Trevyllian, but to my fancy, Rolleston

Court is a fine old place, and not more grim than befits its owner," observed her uncle with a smile, as the house appeared at the termination of the stately avenue.

"Miss Grace Trevyllian thinks much as you do, touching the stately grandeur of the house ; but she will not admit the grimness of its owner ; she would be most ungrateful if she could, when that owner has been for months playing the wanderer for her sake, guessing her wishes, and complying with her many whims," exclaimed the grateful girl with swimming eyes.

"She has made me a sad vagabond, I must allow ; and, what is worse, has I fear been corrupted by the world, and taught to flatter."

"You do not suspect me of that, dear uncle," said Grace taking his hand.

"I ought to do it," he replied with an affectionate smile.

"No, you ought not, I am still your own simple guileless Grace ; not over wise, but always sincere,"

“Sincere! Now to try you. So you really do think Rolleston Court a very fine old place, and not at all gloomy.”

“I am not going to praise the architecture, uncle; and yet the massiveness of the building partakes of grandeur; but look at those fine woods with their autumn tints, so rich, so varied; part in shadow, part in light. Admire that stately avenue! we have seen nothing like it in our wanderings: look at that soft clear sky above—then turn to the west. Saw you ever a more glorious sunset? Islands of purple in a golden sea, curtained with a rich, crimson canopy. The old place has put on its best holyday attire to welcome us home.”

“And you will not find it dull, Grace?” questioned her uncle, gazing with delight on the animated speaker.

“Not a bit! not a bit! dear uncle. I expect you to be so entertaining!”

“You are grown saucy, Grace,” observed

Mr. Rolleston gaily, placing his hand caressingly upon her shoulder, and looking out at the sunset.

“But that knoll!—that hated knoll! which should be mine, and is another’s; that mark of my shame,” he exclaimed drawing back with a motion of disgust, whilst a frown gathered on his brow.

“I did not see it. Why should you, dear uncle?” Do but look how beautiful the setting sun gleams on the rich glade up in your favourite woods,” said his niece turning his attention in an opposite direction.

“Ah! child; things take their colouring from our own thoughts and feelings. The prospect has no beauty now for me. But we will be gay to-day,” he added, not unmindful of her affectionate stratagem to draw him from a painful subject. “You did not feel as you do now when we first passed up this avenue together.”

"You were a stranger to me then, dear uncle ; and I feared you—now I love you."

"Shall you never fear me again ?"

"I hope not."

"And I hope so too," he observed but a something in his tone struck like a jarring chord on Grace's ear.

"I find my own fireside so very delightful, that you will have to coax a long time, Miss Gracey, before you persuade me to turn vagabond again," said Mr. Rolleston a few days after.

"If I condescend to coax, uncle, I have no doubt of success."

"You are a proud little minx, Grace, with all your outward show of humility ; and the strangest mixture of the wisdom of age, with the playful simplicity of childhood, that ever visited this earth. But remember you are not to get ill again ; you promised to be very happy ; and yet there is sometimes a sadness, a restlessness about you, when you think me

looking at other things, which is not in accordance with that promise."

"You must not get fanciful, dear uncle ; or I shall take you off for change of air, instead of your taking me," replied his niece with a playful smile, that would have been quite satisfactory, had she looked in his face as she spoke, according to her usual custom.

"Not you indeed. But here comes the paper ! so now for politics, though there is little worth reading when parliament is prorogued."

"News, masters, news ! great news, and grand news !" exclaimed Mr. Rolleston in a sarcastic tone, after perusing a paragraph in the third page. "Listen Grace !"

"Elopement in High Life.—We understand that considerable surprise has been caused in the fashionable circles by the elopement of Viscount B——n, son of the Earl of S——, with the beautiful and accomplished niece of Mrs. G——g, of Grosvenor Square ; the

belle of the last season. The non-appearance of the young lady at breakfast induced enquiries, when it was found that, accompanied by her maid, she had quitted the house at a very early hour in the morning; and walked to the corner of the square, where the noble Viscount was in waiting with a chaise and four, which immediately proceeded at a rapid pace on the northern road. It is rumoured that a former engagement on the lady's side, joined to some slight differences as to settlements between the heads of the families, induced the lovers to secure their happiness by a trip to Gretna, instead of waiting for a more regular ceremonial at St. George's."

"There is my four hundred a year saved! I knew it would come to this, when you were not by to lecture Julia into good behaviour. And here is a double illustration of the biter bit; for I have no doubt that each head connived unknown to the other. Thanks to extravagance and gambling; the earl and his

son, with a large landed property, are little better than titled beggars, so would have found it awkward to make settlements; a point quite as difficult to the Gunning's, who have sunk all their money in annuities for their joint lives; so that Julia, with all their boasting, was heiress—to nothing. But what do you say to this, Grace? Have you no excuse for dear Julia?"

Grace had no excuse for dear Julia—she could not speak, though her lips moved; and Mr. Rolleston had scarcely time to catch the fainting girl in his arms, as she was falling from her chair.

"Can what you read be true?" asked Grace, when Sarah and the others summoned to her assistance had retired; and she was sufficiently recovered to converse. "It may be a false report," she added, shading her face with her hand, so that Mr. Rolleston could not catch its expression.

"I have no doubt of the truth of the rumour,

as it is only what I have long expected ; but I am vexed at my folly in telling you so abruptly. I thought you had grown strong, and could bear anything."

" I am much stronger ; but this news was so startling !—so unexpected !—so impossible !—after——"

" You had reconciled the lovers," observed Mr. Rolleston, concluding the sentence, which she had broken off in some confusion. " Your good offices having been required should have convinced you of Julia's instability. Dudley has been ill used, that is certain ; but Viscount Brotherton will avenge his wrongs, though in my opinion his loss is a gain ; yet I suppose he will not think so. A few days may bring letters, so we will dismiss the subject at present, as I see it agitates you."

A few days did bring letters—letters which proved the justice of all Mr. Rolleston's conclusions. Lord Sellmore and Mr. Gunning aware of the difficulty of making settlements,

the first from his enormous debts, the second from having nothing but an annuity, had both covertly connived at the elopement, each believing the other a man of wealth; and great was their rage and consternation on the discovery of the truth. Both wrote to Mr. Rolleston endeavouring to make himself appear the injured party, more than hinting a hope that he would supply the deficiency of foresight in the young people, and since the deed was done, not only confirm the previous promise of four hundred a year, which both chose to take for granted; but, in consideration of his great-niece's having married a viscount, the heir of an earldom, endow her with a fortune befitting her husband's rank.

Besides these letters came one purporting to be from Viscount and Viscountess Brotherton full of contrition for their rash act, to which they had been driven by the opposition of their relatives, and the difficulties of their situation; expressing a hope that Mr. Rolleston would

forgive and assist them; and concluding with the declaration of their being—‘His dutiful and affectionate nephew and niece.’

It was a clever performance, the entire production of Lord Brotherton, as Julia, notwithstanding an angry remonstrance from her husband, refused to take any part in its composition. How could she after professing such devoted affection to Dudley, excuse her marriage with another? Had that affection been mere profession? No. Moved by the persuasions of her aunt, and the promptings of her own vanity, she had eloped with Lord Brotherton, but she neither loved nor esteemed him. He had piqued and practised on her vanity, till he had induced her to break off her engagement with another; but he had won neither the respect nor the affection possessed by his rival; and now finding her a beggar instead of an heiress, he scrupled not in his disappointment to upbraid her with the very error into which he had led her. Lord Brotherton

avenged the wrong inflicted on Dudley ! Julia felt all her shame ; and was already the prey of regret and remorse.

“ Clever letters !” said Mr. Rolleston as he handed them to his niece. “ Shall I ask Viscount and Viscountess Brotherton, my dutiful and affectionate nephew and niece, to conclude their honeymoon here ?”

“ Oh, no !” exclaimed Grace in alarm ; then checking herself, under the idea that it was selfish thus to prevent a meeting, which might advantage Julia, she added : “ Yes, do dear uncle, if you wish it.”

“ I do not wish it,” said her uncle laughing at her alarm. “ I read Lord Brotherton’s character from the first, and was much amused in watching the skill with which he carried on his game. His cool impertinence in desiring his love to you at the conclusion of the letter is admirable, considering that you had before rejected that love, which he then transferred to Julia.”

“ You knew his character, and yet could treat him as you did !” remarked his niece in surprise.

“ What of that ? I was neither his tutor, nor his parent, that I should lecture him. I saw that whilst you were in no danger of being deceived by his wiles, he might prove an efficient instrument for breaking off the match with Dudley, which I never liked. If he could not obtain Mr. Rolleston’s heiress, he would console himself with Mr. Gunning’s ;—he has won her ; and I envy neither the Viscount nor the Viscountess.”

“ And you could see all this and yet not warn Julia ? Oh uncle ! you are partly answerable for this evil which you might have prevented.”

“ Nonsense, child ; you are too scrupulous. Julia would not have heeded a warning,” replied Mr. Rolleston rather sharply, for his own conscience whispered that the rebuke was merited.

To fathom Grace's character, to annoy the Gunnings, and break off the match with Dudley, if he himself had not committed evil, he had not endeavoured to prevent others from its commission.

"I suppose in penance for my sin you will next persuade me to give Julia a wedding portion."

"Indeed, I do hope, dear uncle—"

"Hope nothing on this point, Grace; and say nothing; for I will not listen to a word in behalf of her or her husband. I would rather support a colony of beggars;—it would be a less wasteful expenditure. You may send as a wedding present, the 'Duties of husbands and wives.'"

Seeing that it would be in vain to plead for Julia then, and obliged to admit that she deserved the fate which she had brought on herself, Grace said no more on the subject to her uncle; but sent her sister a pretty bridal gift, accompanied by a note briefly expressing her

wishes for her future happiness, without any allusion to the past. Julia's reply was briefer still ; her thanks concluding with these words : " I do not deserve this kindness at your hands ; you do not upbraid me as others do, yet you must despise her whom you once loved."

Mr. Rolleston's answers to his correspondents if short, were not sweet.

" The four hundred a year had been promised to Mrs. Dudley—Lady Brotherton should expect, and would receive nothing," wrote that lady's great-uncle.

Lord Sellmore and the Gunnings, disappointed in their expectations, aware that their motives had been penetrated, writhing beneath the contempt of him, whom they had hoped to make their dupe, and too selfish to stint themselves of a single luxury for the sake of others, expressing a proper moral horror of the sin of elopement, left the young couple so ill provided that they were obliged to seek a home on the continent, immediately on the expiration of

the honeymoon ; and she who had so often ridiculed the idea of love in a cottage, was compelled to endure the discomforts of a cottage without love to make them bearable. The flattered beauty had after all become a poor man's wife, and the terrors of that poverty from which she had shrunk, were now unmitigated by respect or affection for the partner of her lot.

Within a week after Julia's marriage the papers announced the death of Mrs. Dudley, who, contrary to general expectation, had lingered on day after day, attended by the anxious and affectionate Ernest in whose arms she expired. Her last look was on his face—her last words were a blessing on his head ; and the grief of the son was soothed by the hope of a reunion with his much loved parent ; and the memory of her dying assertion, that he had been to her all that the most devoted child could be.

And it was whilst watching by this dying

mother, that his betrothed had broken her faith, and given her hand to another !

Lord Brotherton was not flattered by his young wife's tears when informed of Mrs. Dudley's death.

“ What a change in the prospects of many since a few short months ! ” was Grace's thought. “ Julia, instead of being engaged to Ernest Dudley, was the wife of Lord Brotherton. Lord Brotherton, instead of being her lover, was her sister's husband ; and Dudley was now disengaged—free to choose and free to woo—and she—” but she dared not think of herself, so went on to moralise on the condition of others. “ There was the kind-hearted Bradley still intent on bringing his plough to perfection, and making all around him as happy as his unob-servant good nature could devise. Stephen was still playing the popular, and winning golden opinions from all, not by giving, for he had little to give ; but by flattering their weaknesses, and falling in with their opinions.

Young Marshall was Eliza's accepted lover with her father's consent, in spite of her mother's disapprobation. There was little change in them, but that mother and Harriet, though their dispositions remained the same—what a change had come over the hopes of both ! Mrs. Bradley and her eldest daughter had been overturned in an open carriage, not long after Grace's departure on her tour. The former had received such serious internal injuries that, though likely to live for years, her life must for the future be a life of pain, sometimes of torture ; whilst Harriet, otherwise uninjured, was so disfigured in face, so bowed in figure, as to startle all who beheld her. The beauty that was to have gained her a rich and titled husband was no more ; and with that beauty had fled all her attractions, for mind she had none ; and her temper only became more tart and selfish from her accident. Within two months Lord Langfield wedded another ; and to increase the mortification of mother and

daughter, the bride was plain and dowdy, though of rank ; but then she considered his lordship the handsomest man in England, and that was sufficient to prove her wisdom in his eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

DAYS passed on, as days do pass on, all of the same length; that is, night and day conjoined all of the same twenty-four hours, composed of the same sixty minutes; and yet how do those same hours and minutes of the same real length, vary in apparent duration to all! The mind counts not as the horologe; the heart beats not with the same regularity as the chronometer; and even two would rarely agree as to the length of a day were not the dial and the watch at hand to prevent dispute.

To say nothing of the same county—in the same family—the same house—the same room, how often does one complain of the length of the day, whilst another has thought it fled too fast; to one the hours have been clogged by weariness or disappointment; to the other, they have been winged by hope or joy. Thus it has ever been—and thus, I doubt, it will ever be, as long as time shall last; and it would be a waste of that same time to moralise longer, for the very dullest must have felt at some moment of their existence that they have lived years in an hour, nay, almost a life; that the hopes, the fears, the joys, of an entire being have all been crowded into a brief space; followed, it may be, by a long blank—a weary monotony; thoughtless, soulless, joyless, compared with the rapture of that one brief hour. But such hours are rare—very rare; or life would be worn out too soon. Time husbands its delights, doling them out with a sparing hand, instead of pouring them forth like a

spendthrift ; and it was with a wise and housewifely care that it bestowed its pleasures on Grace Trevyllian, during the winter months. She did not live a whole life in a day ; but then neither did she droop beneath the succeeding reaction ; every hour increased the affectionate confidence between the uncle and niece. If Grace had hopes and wishes unrevealed they neither affected her health, nor temper ; whilst Mr. Rolleston bade fair to lose all his grimness beneath her softening influence. The season, and the absence of the Logans threw them more together, making them dependent on each other for amusement ; and this mutual dependence made their union closer. They began to feel that they should not be happy apart ; that not only Rolleston Court, but any other place would want a something if one were absent ; and Grace grew more assured each succeeding day that her increasing love for her uncle would prevent the recurrence of fear ; but—yes, but is an ugly word, yet it thrusts

itself into all our earthly joys, proving that this is not our abiding place, that here nothing is perfect ; but time might show that she was mistaken ; that his affection was not to be relied on, till it had stood the test of opposition to some favourite scheme. Hitherto their wishes had been generally the same ; or when he had yielded to hers, as in the case of the union with Dudley, he had done so with the conviction that this very consent would be the most effectual means of preventing that to which he objected.

Winter passed, as we have said, in growing confidence, and March was come not with rude blustering winds as is its wont, but with the gentle feel and balmy air of spring. The hedge-rows were clothed with the soft green of the bursting leaves, interspersed with the snowy flower of the black thorn ; the primrose peeped from beneath the tangled boughs, or looked down into the stream from the side of some sunny bank ; the violet from its sheltered bower flung

fragrance far around ; whilst the silvery snow-drop, the golden crocus lingering late, and the scarlet anemone adorned the gardens. The song of the birds was heard among the groves, not full and constant as in summer, but at intervals more low, yet not less sweet ; and the rooks, as they collected the materials for their nests and arranged them about the ancient oaks of the avenue, kept up a continuous cawing, not unpleasing to Grace, who, as she watched their labours from the drawing-room window, almost fancied she could understand their discordant notes ; and was half tempted in a moment of girlish gaiety to attempt a conversation with the sagacious looking architects.

At that moment her heart was full of love for all living things ;—it could sympathise in the joys or griefs of the minutest beings that had breath. The sportive fawn, and the sober rook could alike command her interest, and she would have joined in the gambols of the one, and assisted in the labours of the other,

had they sought or required her assistance. She was not in what could be termed high spirits; but as she gazed on the velvet turf with its fresh spring verdure, then up at the azure sky with its fleecy, floating clouds, and listened to the sounds of busy, joyous nature, she was filled with love and gratitude; her heart beat quickly, with a sudden rush of happiness; a soft and dreamy look came into her large dark eyes—her bosom heaved with a wild, yet vague delight; and the buoyant spirit seemed dismembered of its earthly body, winged with the anticipation of some coming good. The present showed all joy—the future glowed more joyous still. The bitterness of the past was remembered no more; only its sweetness lingered in the mind. Who has not known such moments as these at some time or other in their lives, when our whole being seems made up of hope? Hope that no gloom can mar—a charm no ill can break.

It was with such feelings that Grace looked

out on the garden, and across the extensive park on this morning of early spring, near the close of March, winning health and joy from its warm, fresh air; and the brightness of those feelings was far from being marred by the sight of the Bolton's servant. No doubt he was the bearer of the expected letters from the Logans; and those letters always brought her pleasure; so far her presentiment of good was likely to be realized; but at some distance came a gentleman on horseback followed by a groom in a brown and yellow livery; and visitors were so very rare that Grace remained at the window to ascertain the name of this unexpected guest.

It was Mr. Jolliffe, of Jolliffe Court; not the heir; but the possessor of the coveted knoll;—of all human beings the most hateful to her uncle. He could never intend to seek an interview with Mr. Rolleston! He, the son of a manufacturer, could never intend to force himself into the presence of the stern, the relentless owner of Rolleston Court, the descendant of

a great Norman family, aware as he must be of that gentleman's enmity. He must have made a mistake, or could only intend to leave a message.

It was no mistake; and his purpose was not to leave a message. She heard him ushered into the library; a sudden thrill of fear shot across her frame. What could he want with her uncle? That she could not tell; but his coming had broken the spell of her bright mood; and even when the longed for packet from her friends was placed in her hands, a strange and causeless fear remained. She knew Mr. Jolliffe by sight from having seen him at church, and met him at the Boltons; but they had never exchanged a word.

Her mind would have dwelt longer on the circumstance; had not the contents of the letters banished all painful ideas; the future was again traced on rose-coloured pages. A long and delightful reverie succeeded their

perusal—how long she did not know ; till roused by Mr. Rolleston's step in the hall, she glanced at the clock and found it was full an hour since Mr. Jolliffe had been ushered into the library. As she looked from the window she caught a glimpse of the departing guest at the further extremity of the avenue.

What could he have been saying to her uncle all that time? Nothing unpleasant it should seem ; for Mr. Rolleston's look, as he entered the room, was the look of one who had received agreeable intelligence.

“How are your friends, Grace?” he began, taking a seat beside her. “You hold your packet as if resolved that I should not learn one word of the contents. Had I not seen it in the servant's hands, I verily believe you would have concealed its arrival. How is the invalid?”

“An invalid no longer,” replied his niece in some confusion at his remark, which was very near the truth.

"I am glad to hear it. Do they talk of a speedy return?"

"There is no chance of that, I am sorry to say."

"Why not?"

"They will probably remain in Italy for some time to come."

"I chance to be in a particularly good humour, Grace, or your unusual brevity would put me in a passion. Have either of your friends eloped that you look so red, and so embarrassed?"

"No, dear uncle: not eloped—but—"

"Going to be married, I suppose, by your looking so silly. You could not shew more confusion if Grace Trevyllian were the heroine of the tale."

"It is always an embarrassing subject to young ladies, you know."

"In their own case, I admit; but really here is much superfluous blushing and confusion. Who is the happy man? what is he like? and

what is his fortune? You young ladies know all these things."

Grace hesitated.

"What is the meaning of this silence?—She is not going to marry Dudley is she?"

"No!" cried Grace with a start.

"I am glad of that:—but who is it then? Come, child, do speak."

"One whom you have forbidden me to name?"

"What Rawdon? Surely she is not going to marry that madcap Rawdon?" exclaimed Mr. Rolleston, starting in his turn.

"So she informs me."

"And you rejoice at it;" he remarked, looking keenly at his niece.

"Yes, dear uncle; I am sure it will prove for the happiness of both."

"Ah child! you are sure of many things, that never come to pass. How and when did they meet?"

"Major Rawdon's regiment being stationed

at Malta, he obtained leave of absence with the intention of making the tour of Italy ; but meeting Charlotte at Naples proceeded no further."

" So he fell in love at first sight ;—that is just like him."

" They have been acquainted many weeks ; but the letter announcing their first introduction has been lost it appears."

" I thought Bradley talked some nonsense of your being his little wife. Have the lady and gentleman no dread of the penalties of bigamy ?"

" They ask me to forego my claim, and consent to their union ;" replied Grace with a smile, reassured by the particular good humour of which her uncle had boasted. " I suppose for the future they mean to regard me under a new relation, as Major Rawdon, for the first time in his life, instead of beginning, my dear little wife ; begins my dear child. I suspected the fact from this novel commencement."

“ She is too good for him ; but women will have their own way,” observed Mr. Rolleston, shrugging his shoulders. “ Tell him when you write that I will have the canoe made ready for his use.”

“ I will tell him no such thing, dear uncle.”

“ You are saucy, Miss Grace. I must say it myself then, should we meet. I suppose you gave his bride an account of his adventure. He is a lucky man to win such a wife, and with a fortune too ; for I conclude you will be such a good natured simpleton as to withdraw your claims.”

“ What else can I do ? It would not be decorous to bring my claims into a court of justice, though I could produce more than one letter from Major Rawdon, addressed to his dear little wife ; besides they both declare that the blame rests solely upon me. If I had not praised Major Rawdon to Charlotte, she should never have thought of becoming attached to him ; and if Charlotte had not stolen away his

heart by talking of my perfections, that heart would still have been devoted to me. Then I more than suspect that if I refuse my consent, they will marry without it; so, as I said before, what can I do?"

"Marry before them;—I will provide the bridegroom."

"No I thank you dear uncle," replied Grace with quickness, not liking his tone.

"Yes if you please, dear niece. I am not in jest; you have made a conquest, and can make me and yourself happy at the same time."

"That I will endeavour to do without a bridegroom;" interposed poor Grace in growing alarm of she knew not what.

"No; that you must do by accepting the bridegroom, who is ready to throw himself at your feet. Mr. Jolliffe has been here this morning to propose his son for my acceptance. You have often met the young man, I believe."

"Yes; in my walks, and at the rectory; but always against my inclination, and in deference

to your wishes, as well as my own, I have ever avoided him when possible; and when compelled to meet, for by some strange fatality he was constantly in my path, the coldness of my manner should have prevented any such application as that of which you speak."

"I am obliged by your past deference to my wishes, but this morning's interview has changed my plans. Mr. Jolliffe did not come as a purse-proud parvenu thinking that he was going to confer, not receive an honor; on the contrary, his whole demeanour showed that he felt and admitted the distinction between a family of yesterday, and one dating from the conquest. He candidly allowed the presumption of his suit, only excusing that presumption by the importunities of his son, whose hitherto hopeless passion has injured his health. The whole of the property purchased from my father is to be reannexed to the Rolleston estate; and I shall no longer feel the shame of having dismembered the domain of my ancestors. And

this, Grace—this I shall owe to you,” added her uncle, laying his hand affectionately upon her shoulder.

“Ask anything but this !” exclaimed the trembling girl, looking up in his face with tearful eyes.

“This is Missish folly ! you should be above such nonsense. Tears and blushes may delight a lover, but they are out of place with an uncle—keep them for young Jolliffe, who with his father will dine here to-morrow.”

“Do not say so ! I cannot see him—I cannot esteem him :—never, never, will I be his !” exclaimed his niece in painful agitation.

“Not to make me happy ?” asked her uncle reproachfully.

“I would bear much to do that ; but you could not be happy, dear uncle, I am sure you could not, if you saw me wretched,” said Grace with earnestness, taking his hand.

“But you would not be wretched ; he is a

good son and a kind landlord, with a most amiable disposition."

"A good son, and a kind landlord, I dare say ; but a very stupid lover."

"That you cannot tell till you have seen him in such a character."

"Oh ! yes, I can. Indeed—indeed, dear uncle, you must tell him not to come."

"I shall tell him no such thing. Do not provoke me, Grace, by this folly ; you have yet to learn what I can be when thwarted. What do you object to in this young man?"

"Many things ; I can neither respect, nor love him," faltered the blushing girl, trembling at her uncle's anger. "My intercourse with you has made me fastidious ; and I could not be happy with one of such inferior intellect."

"I am not to be turned from my purpose by flattery and wheedling ;" observed Mr. Rolleston sternly, withdrawing his hand which she had hitherto retained. "And let me hear

no more unmaidenly and romantic nonsense about love. Is this a proof of the gratitude so often expressed?"

"I am truly grateful; but to prove that gratitude do not condemn me to a whole life of misery. Ask any thing but this."

"I ask nothing—I command you to receive young Jolliffe as your future husband," replied Mr. Rolleston with a tone which made her shudder. "To appease your woman's prudery instead of accepting his proposals at once, he is to enact the lover for a month, that none may say you have unwooed been won; at the end of that time, you consent to become his bride—or quit my roof for ever."

"Only hear me!" exclaimed his niece, springing after him as he was leaving the room, and looking imploringly into those pitiless eyes.

"I will not hear a word, rebellious girl," he cried, flinging off her hand with a startling burst of passion. "Your father crossed me, and I sent him forth, my curse upon his head.

Where is he now ? Slaving beneath a burning sun—his children beggars, living upon charity. And yet I loved him better than I love you. Take heed, lest I send you too forth, my curse upon your head, as upon his. I will hear nothing on this subject for a month ;—then let me find obedience.”

Grace watched him leave the apartment with a stately tread, then listened with bent head and eager ear to his retreating steps, hoping that he would relent and return ; but when she found that he did not come back the faint hope which had hitherto supported her gave way ; and sinking into a seat she covered her face with her hands, whilst the large tears forced their way through her slender fingers.

Where was now the affectionate confidence, the growth of months ? Destroyed at a stroke—gone never to return. An hour since and she had loved that proud, stern man ; and now she feared him ;—feared him as she so lately thought that she should never fear again. But

he might yet relent;—he had been moved by her tears before, he might be moved by her tears again;—he could not thus suddenly throw off all feeling of affection;—he could not see her suffer and continue obdurate.

Then she thought of his flashing eye, his fearful frown, as he flung off her hand;—how he had banished her father, the child of his care;—how he had mocked at the prayers of her kneeling mother; and she felt that her hopes were vain—that he would not relent.

Had this union promised only rank or wealth he might have yielded, for to a certain extent, he despised both; but it included the restitution of those lands lost by his youthful extravagance—it healed the wound, unseared by time, inflicted on his pride; and the conviction grew upon her that her doom was sealed. An outcast, or a wretched wife!—there was no other choice;—the best she could expect a residence at Elmwood Lodge;—no; there was one brighter hope, a home with the

Rawdons. But ought she to become dependant on their bounty?

Poor Grace! was she never to know peace in this world of care and strife? As Mr. Rolleston fronted her at dinner, she ventured an anxious, timid glance at his countenance; but she did not venture on another throughout that wretched evening. He had handed her into the dining room, a form never omitted; but her hand shook as it rested on his arm, and she could scarcely keep pace with his haughty stride.

“Let us have some music!” he said on the removal of the tea, almost the only words he had addressed to her since the morning.

He followed her to the piano in silence; but did not continue there long.

“You are singing horridly out of tune, Grace; so, hating discord, I shall seek peace in my study. Good night; and a better morning.”

The tears which she had before been hardly

able to repress, burst forth at this harsh remark ; but her uncle left the room without taking any notice of the effect produced by his words.

Anxious to avoid a meeting with young Jolliffe, Grace would have ventured a fresh appeal on the morrow ; but the frown on his haughty brow and his stern look awed her into silence, so the dreaded meeting took place ; and conscious that Mr. Rolleston's eye was on her, she had the vexation of feeling that she appeared as silly and awkward as her lover, who looked red and sheepish, and said nothing. Aware that this confusion must rather encourage than diminish that lover's hopes, she rallied all her self-possession, and after a time played the dignified hostess to perfection ; at least so thought the Jolliffe's ;—her uncle, seeing deeper, was less pleased, but not the less resolved.

Never did any one long more anxiously for the departure of their guests than did Grace

Trevyllian; and yet their departure seemed only likely to procure her a temporary cessation of annoyance, as she heard Mr. Rolleston assure the timid lover that he should be happy to see him whenever he chose to call; an assurance received by the devoted youth with evident delight.

To mark the high esteem in which he held his guests, Mr. Rolleston attended them to their carriage; and then merely wishing Grace a cold ‘good night,’ retired to rest without any comment on her conduct.

Though silent, his manner showed his displeasure; and Grace felt that her only chance was an appeal to the generosity of her lover; but this appeal she did not find it as easy to make as she had expected. Though availing himself of her uncle’s invitation he spent much of his time with his fair mistress, two circumstances delayed her purpose. Mr. Rolleston, possibly from a suspicion of her intentions, was generally present; and the young man,

either from timidity, or a friendly hint, never spoke of his future hopes ; and to say—no—before receiving any intimation that she would be requested to say—yes—was scarcely maidenly ; so the appeal was deferred, day after day for more than a fortnight, till a visitor arrived, the bearer of unexpected intelligence.

CHAPTER VIII.

“WELCOME to Rolleston!” said its owner advancing to meet his guest, though not with quite as much warmth as usual, from a doubt whether his presence would further the projected union.

“Dear cousin Bradley! I am so glad to see you,” exclaimed the ardent Grace, receiving the accustomed hug with more than her wonted delight, hoping to find a powerful ally in this unexpected visitor.

Her uncle guessed her hopes, and his frown grew the darker.

“To what am I indebted for this unlooked for pleasure?” asked Mr. Rolleston after due enquiries touching his family.

“To a still more unlooked for occurrence,” replied the warm-hearted Bradley, who, as we have before remarked, not being blessed with much penetration, was apt to exhibit more zeal than prudence. “Trevyllian and his wife are just arrived from India; and I thought it would be better to inform you of the event in person.”

“You are very considerate!” remarked Mr. Rolleston with that cold, cynical smile which his honest cousin had never met before.

“Are papa and mamma really returned?” questioned Grace with eager delight; then added in a sadder tone—“But it is so long since they went, and I was so young then, that they cannot love me much now.”

“You are quite mistaken there, Grace, they

are never weary of talking and hearing of you ; and loaded me with a thousand loves."

"Do you bring me a letter?" she asked, aware that her warm-hearted cousin occasionally invented or coloured messages to please his hearers.

"No ; they did not write," he replied with a glance at Mr. Rolleston, which said, as plainly as glance could say, he might not have approved of it ; at least, so both uncle and niece interpreted that look, and neither was pleased with the interpretation.

"Mr. Trevyllian has brought home a splendid fortune, I suppose," observed Mr. Rolleston sarcastically, fixing his flashing eyes on his guest, whilst his brow grew more contracted ; and his cheek became of an ashy paleness.

He could not quite conceal the emotion caused by the sudden intelligence of his nephew's return to England.

"Quite the contrary, I am sorry to say.

He has paid his debt to Wood ; but, owing to the breaking of a bank, and the failure of the indigo crops, will not have more than a hundred or so, unless the affairs of the bankrupts should turn out better than is expected."

"This might matter to others ; but Mr. Trevyllian preferred love in a cottage to a handsome fortune," sneered Mr. Rolleston.

"I have not much more taste for love in a cottage than yourself ; but certainly your nephew is the most contented person I ever knew ; and there cannot be a more attached and devoted couple. Except that there is no nonsense about them, you would fancy them married only yesterday," replied Mr. Bradley, annoyed and confused at his host's sarcastic tone, and saying what came uppermost for the sake of saying something.

Unluckily, there were few things he could have said more displeasing to his cynical cousin, and less likely to facilitate his purpose

of bringing about a reconciliation between the disinherited nephew, and his rich uncle.

“All for love or the world well lost!” remarked Mr. Rolleston, with increasing bitterness. “Mr. Trevyllian was always a wise man—a perfect philosopher. What are his views in coming to England? I was not aware of his being expected.”

“Ill health compelled an immediate return; and though in some measure restored by the voyage, he is still in a very precarious state. You would scarcely recognise him—he is so altered; no longer a fine handsome young man, but a sallow, sickly invalid; and to see his sweet and devoted wife turn away with swimming eyes is enough to make one’s heart ache; and I doubt if she could survive his loss.”

“Is my father so very ill then?” asked the sympathising Grace, the tears coming into her eyes at the idea; and the love of her childhood

returning with full force at the thought of her parent's sufferings.

"Not in immediate danger; but ill enough to alarm his friends," replied Mr. Bradley, watching his host to mark the effect produced by his words. A sterner contraction of the brow; and a working of the mouth were the only visible signs of emotion.

"You wish to go and help nurse your father, Grace," said Mr. Rolleston abruptly, breaking the silence, which had succeeded his visitor's last remark.

"Yes," cried Grace with eagerness.

"Go then!" said her uncle in a hollow voice.

Forgetting the harshness of the last few days, she would have thrown her arms round his neck and thanked him for thus guessing her wishes, and fulfilling them; but he drew back hastily shrinking from her gratitude.

"Go!" he repeated in a voice that made his hearers shudder. "Go!" but return to me no

more. Never again shall you stand in my presence. Now make your choice."

The trembling girl looked at her cousin, who was as much distressed as herself.

"Oh, no! I am sure Mr. and Mrs. Trevyllian would be very sorry that she should leave her uncle," he stammered out; and Grace's heart sank within her at his words.

Her parents did not desire her presence! Years of absence had worn out the affection lavished on her childhood; yet, ere many days, she might be driven in disgrace from the roof that now sheltered her; and then where was she to find a home? Her head drooped on her bosom; and she continued silent.

"Speak, girl! do you go or stay?" asked Mr. Rolleston fiercely.

"I will stay with you till you send me away."

There was a something so touching in her humble attitude, and low, sad tone, that her kind-hearted cousin, as he turned aside, passed his hand across his eyes to remove a sudden dimness; but her uncle was either unmoved, or controlled all show of emotion.

“That point decided, I conclude we may turn to the discussion of more agreeable subjects; unless you were deputed to make some extraordinary communication,” remarked Mr. Rolleston to his guest.

“Why, I was deputed;—that is, I proposed to come; but there never was a worse ambassador,” stammered poor Bradley, so confused at his awful cousin’s anger, which he had never before encountered, that unable to decide whether it would be better to speak, or be silent, he attempted to combine the two, thus losing the power of a bold frankness; and the advantage of a judicious silence.

“We will talk further of this matter by

and bye, he said, not deeming the present a propitious moment to press his suit.

“No delay—now or never,” exclaimed Mr. Rolleston vehemently. “For what purpose did you come hither? Speak boldly out.”

Thus adjured Mr. Bradley had nothing left but compliance with the imperious mandate; yet he spoke hesitatingly and with no effect, for he despaired of success, regretting that he had undertaken the part of mediator. Who was ever eloquent under such circumstances?

“Since you insist on my speaking, I tell you candidly I came to explain your nephew’s unhappy situation, in hopes of softening your resentment. But we had better discuss this subject in private,” he added, breaking off his intended communication on catching Mr. Rolleston’s angry glance at Grace, who sat as before, pale and trembling, with her face bowed nearly to her knees.

“No: let the daughter hear what I say to her father, and learn the reward of rebellion.

Proceed! What would you say of Mr. Tre-vyllian?—I own him not as a nephew,” he continued stamping with impatience at Bradley’s hesitation.

“I would have you understand his present situation; I would have you see him to comprehend how much he is worn, and enfeebled by a long residence in India.”

“We meet no more on earth! He went not without warning—he chose his fate, and must abide it! Do you come as his accredited ambassador?”

“Oh no, nothing so grand, or so formal as that. I come of my own accord to move you to pity by the plain statement, that your nephew’s health requires the first medical advice, and many luxuries, which his scanty means cannot supply, the voyage having nearly exhausted all his funds. But more than this, I have to say that he is anxious, most anxious to receive your forgiveness—to hear you recall the doom poured on his head at your last part-

ing. He still regards you as a parent, and cannot die in peace till reconciled; whilst his poor wife is wretched thinking herself the cause of your estrangement. You cannot refuse assistance and forgiveness to your dying nephew."

"Let him die! he receives neither from me;" replied Mr. Rolleston with the triumphant look of a demon, contemplating the misery wrought by his power.

"I will not believe you in earnest," exclaimed Bradley, shuddering as he gazed on his vindictive cousin.

"Will you believe me in earnest if I swear it?—if I say that it has been my hope for years to bring him and his wife to despair? They now know what it is to oppose my will."

"But now that they are suffering and deeply regret having offended you, surely your heart will be softened; and you will pardon if not assist," pleaded his cousin to whom such unrelenting hatred was incomprehensible.

“Do they indeed regret having offended me? Do they repent their marriage?” he demanded sternly, fixing his glaring eyes on his cousin to read his inward thoughts.

“They do most deeply regret having incurred your anger.”

“Let them prove that regret, for I heed not idle words. Let Trevyllian part from his wife—swear never to see her again; and he shall have every luxury that wealth can procure.”

“I will make no such proposal—I should not deserve the name of man if I could, after seeing and hearing of that wife’s devotion. It would break her heart to hear it; and he would be worse than a brute if he did not spurn the offer,” exclaimed Bradley with honest, but impolitic indignation.

“Then let them starve!—die with my curse upon their heads!” cried Mr. Rolleston, clenching his hands, and setting his teeth.

A cry of horror broke from his niece at these

fearful words ;—she would have thrown herself at her uncle's feet ; but was too faint to rise.

“ They shall not starve, as long as I have a shilling left,” cried the generous Bradley.

“ Allow me to congratulate you on your wealth ; I thought you had an encumbered estate, and an extravagant wife and sons ; but I must have been misinformed,” replied Mr. Rolleston with a galling sneer.

“ You have not been misinformed, Mr. Rolleston ; and possibly my estate is more deeply encumbered than you imagine ; but I cannot see my relatives perish, and not stretch forth a hand to save them. Whatever my difficulties I would not change with Mr. Rolleston of Rolleston Court, if, with all his wealth, I must have his feelings too.”

“ All to their tastes, Mr. Bradley ; it is wise to despise what is beyond our reach. Enough has been said on this painful subject ; when we

meet at dinner you will not renew it ;—till then—good morning,” said Mr. Rolleston with ironical politeness.

“ Good morning, Mr. Rolleston ; but not only till dinner time. I could not eat a meal under your roof in your present temper, to be master of all your gold ;—it would choke me.”

“ As you please, cousin Bradley ; you were ever a wise man,” observed his host with that hateful smile, so far more galling than open anger.

“ I hope I am an honest and humane man ; and that is better than being a wise one,” replied Mr. Bradley for once in his life thoroughly provoked.

“ You shall be anything you please ; I never disturb the self-complacency of any one, particularly a guest.”

“ I shall not remain your guest longer than may be required for preparing the carriage,” replied Mr. Bradley, ringing the bell furiously as he spoke.

“ Oh, uncle !—dear cousin Bradley !” began the now weeping Grace, turning from the contracted brow of the one to the flushed face of the other.

“ Your attempts to soften me, Grace, would be thrown away ; so I leave you to try your powers on your cousin, wishing you every possible success ; and him a pleasant journey,” remarked Mr. Rolleston, bowing with mock respect as he left the room.

“ I have hitherto defended my cousin Rolleston, thinking him far better than the world asserted ; but I know what he is now ; and can defend him no longer. He did not look like a human being when he said—‘ Let them starve !’ And then that horrid smile, which is no smile at all ; I shudder when I think of it,” muttered Bradley, walking up and down the room to cool his anger. “ And you, poor Gracey ; what a life you must lead with such a tyrant !” he added stopping before the sobbing girl, and taking her hand affection-

ately in his. "He may be rich ; but I would rather be Trevyllian, poor as he is."

"Is my father so very poor?" asked Grace in a despairing tone, looking up in his face.

"It all depends on how the banking concerns turn out, which he expects to learn by the next ship. They may have between two or three hundred a year or nothing."

"Nothing!" repeated Grace in a voice that made Bradley weep outright.

"They shall never want whilst I have any thing, Gracey ; so dry your tears, and hope for the best ; though it is enough to break your heart to live with such a savage."

"I shall not live with him long ;—he will turn me out of his house, as he did my father. And yet he has been so kind—so very kind sometimes ;—and I loved him so much only a month since," said Grace in sorrow. "Do you think, cousin Bradley, that I could support my father and mother by teaching? I would

do any thing to make them comfortable, and not be a burden myself."

"Teaching is but poor work, Grace. Why do you think your uncle will send you away? He seems to me more inclined to keep you."

"Not unless I marry Mr. Richard Jolliffe."

"Whew! that is his plan, is it. Would he give you a fortune then?"

"He would make me his heiress."

"Indeed! this is something like; and you can then help your father. It will be a good match; and I am very glad to hear it. Richard Jolliffe is a worthy young man, and it is well that my cousin Rolleston has some feeling for somebody. When are you to be married?"

"Oh! do not say that I must submit to this marriage!" exclaimed poor Grace, clasping her hands.

"To be sure not, if you do not like him; only do not look in that strange, wild way, for

it makes me cry like a child. Do not you like him?" he asked dashing his hand across his eyes.

"No;" said his cousin with a shiver at the thought.

"Poor child! perhaps you like somebody else."

Grace looked on the ground; and he went on without waiting for a reply.

"I am sorry, because it would be such a good match; but what can't be—can't be; and something better may turn up," he added with his usual cheerful philosophy.

"Will my parents be angry? very angry do you think?" asked Grace in a faltering voice. "In all besides I will obey them and my uncle."

"Angry? no to be sure not; I will tell them all about it; and how you are trembling at the bare thought. Trevyllian chose for himself, yet his uncle had done much more

for him than for you. No, no, you need not dread that."

"Thank you, dear cousin, for saying so; I was afraid all would blame me. And if my uncle should send me away?"

"You shall always find a shelter with me," said Bradley with affectionate warmth. "It may not be a very comfortable home; I fear you did not find it so before; but I will make you as happy as I can; and I dare say we shall all do very well. Do not marry the young man, Grace, if you cannot like him, let your uncle rage as he may; and he is an awful man, that is certain; and do not marry at all in a hurry, or you may repent it all your life, as others have done, when repentance came too late. It is good-temper and not good-looks that makes a happy fireside. But there is the carriage, and I must not trespass on Mr. Rolleston's hospitality."

"Dear, dear, cousin Bradley, what do I not

owe you ?” exclaimed the grateful girl, throwing her arms round the old man’s neck with the frank affection of her younger days, as he stooped to kiss her according to his custom, having ever considered and treated her as a daughter.

“ Nonsense, child ! you owe me nothing ; you are too grateful by half. I will do the best I can, and only wish I could do more. There—be a good girl now ; keep up your spirits ; and all will go well. Do not cry so, Gracey ; it breaks my heart.” Then giving her another hug he broke away, and hurried towards the door.

“ Stop one moment ;” said Grace, checking her tears. “ I have just thought ;—I wonder I never thought of it before. There is my legacy of six hundred pounds. They say I cannot claim it till I come of age ;—but could not you borrow money on it now for my father’s use ? I know nothing of business, or how they manage these things ; but you do,

and I will sign any paper—do any thing. I am sure I could gain a little by teaching, or drawing, or in some other way ; and I should be so happy to win an independence for myself and my parents.”

“ You are a dear, good, girl, Gracey ; and if I were single I would marry you to-morrow whether you would or no,” exclaimed her cousin, gazing on her with admiring affection ; and never considering that she might object to him as a lover as much as she did to young Jolliffe. “ Only keep up your spirits ; and I will see all about it and do all that is right.”

“ Thank you, dear cousin ; and give my love to—”

“ Ay, ay ; I understand—love to papa, and mamma ; to be sure I will ; and tell them what a treasure they possess. Good bye, once for all,” hurrying out of the room to hide the emotion of which he was ashamed.

“ That is a girl of a thousand !” was his thought as the carriage rolled away up the

stately avenue. "They may talk of Julia being a beauty, and so she is, but give me the fright. In spite of white cheeks, and red eyes, she looked a hundred times handsomer than her sister, when she ran after me to offer all her money. She shall never want, nor submit to the drudgery of teaching, whilst I have a penny, I could almost have knelt to her for she looked something more than a woman. To be sure, poor child, she knows nothing of business, promising to sign any paper;—but then how should she? And I like her all the better for this simplicity,—she never thinks of herself."

Grace watched the departing carriage till she could see it no longer, then, turning from the window with a fresh flood of tears, retired to her own apartment. How desolate did she feel now he was gone, and she was left alone to encounter her dreaded uncle! When they met again, which was not till dinner time, Mr. Rolleston, according to his general custom,

made no remark on the past ! and except that he was still more silent, and she fancied spoke a little more harshly, showed no sign of anger or vexation at Bradley's visit.

“ Mr. Jolliffe has been called to town by the sudden and alarming illness of his married daughter, and his son accompanies him ; but hopes to return in a few days,” said Mr. Rolleston to Grace, as she was leaving the dining-room.

His niece made no reply ; but he saw that she was pleased at this interruption to her lover's visits, and added sternly—“ Send my tea to the study.” And for several successive nights was the same order given and obeyed.

Their former cheerful, happy evenings were things departed, to be remembered, and deplored, never again enjoyed ; music, reading, and conversation were laid aside. The uncle sat in his study—the niece in the drawing-room ; and she began to look at its massive furniture, and into its corners with the same feeling

of awe which she had experienced on her first arrival ; she no longer felt at home ; but moved about with the restraint of a stranger ; and so painful grew this estrangement from her uncle that she almost wished for young Jolliffe's return that she might know her fate at once ; but before that return she was doomed to encounter one whom she had not seen for months ; and whom she would never have seen again had the choice rested with herself.

“ Good morning ; I hope I see you 'quite well,” said Stephen Bradley on being ushered into Mr. Rolleston's study, a few days after his father's visit. “ Being on my way to M—— I could not pass so near without calling to enquire after your health,” he continued, not choosing to remark that his host showed more surprise than pleasure at his visit.

“ I should have wondered had you done otherwise,” replied Mr. Rolleston in a tone that might be considered cordial or not according to

the hearer's humour. "Your father is well, I hope."

"Very well I thank you ; and that is another reason why I ventured to intrude on your privacy. I am charged with a thousand apologies for his inexcusable bluntness. But you know my father, sir ; he is apt to take a fancy into his head, and whilst under the dominion of that fancy acts as no reasonable person would think of acting. He is always saying and doing just what he should not, from the mere warmth of his heart ; and then is heartily ashamed of what he has said and done. I assure you my mother and myself were shocked and distressed at hearing what had passed."

"I have no doubt of that ;" replied Mr. Rolleston in perfect sincerity. "Say no more, I understand your father thoroughly."

"Thank you, sir, for this ready forgiveness ; a little mind would never have pardoned my father's foolish warmth of temper ; but you are above the petty sin of malice."

Mr. Rolleston's smile at this compliment was rather grim ; and he asked abruptly—" Are the Trevyllians with you still ?"

" They go to-morrow, sir, I am happy to say. A doctor somebody, who knew them in India, has offered his advice gratis and a cheap cottage at Nettlefield, a small village about twenty miles from Elmwood Lodge : and as they entertain a high opinion of his skill they have accepted the offer."

" And your generous father supplies the means for removal and subsistence I conclude."

" I am sorry to say, sir, he does, at present ; though by the latest accounts from Calcutta there appears some chance of repayment hereafter. I must entreat you to believe that neither my mother nor myself would have countenanced or assisted those who have shown such black ingratitude in thwarting your wishes. This is another of those foolish acts of which my father, with all his good qualities, is occasionally guilty. We said all we could to dissuade him from such

imprudence ; but in vain ; and have been neither art nor part in his impolitic extravagance.”

“ I believe you ; this is evidently all my old friend’s doing ; neither you nor your mother will ever be so far carried away by your feelings as to assist a poor relation, or counsel an impolitic extravagance.”

“ Bless me ! there is the dressing bell. I had no idea it was so late ; but they detained me such a time at T—— changing horses,” exclaimed Stephen Bradley, starting up in pretended surprise, to hide the confusion caused by Mr. Rolleston’s remark, which he did not exactly know how to understand. “ I must coax my cousin Grace to give me five minutes from her toilet, before I take my leave.”

“ Dine and sleep here ; and then you can have a long talk with your cousin,” said his host after an instant’s thought.

“ You are very kind, sir ; but I am ashamed of having come so late ; it looks as if I had expected to be asked.”

“No such heinous sin if you had,” observed Mr. Rolleston graciously, ringing the bell to order all the requisite arrangements.

The arrival of this second unexpected visitor was announced to Grace by her attendant Sarah, who little guessed how unwelcome that announcement was. There was not another person in the world whom she would not rather have encountered; but there was no avoiding the meeting, so all she could do was to assume as much dignity and composure as she could command. They had not met since he had held that drawing before her; and she shrank from the thought of encountering his look; but to show her dread would only make him the more tyrannical in the use of his power;—to appeal to his generosity would be vain, for he had none;—self-interest was his guiding star. A change of circumstances had made a knowledge of her secret rather less painful; but still to feel that he knew, and might reveal

what she feared to whisper to herself was enough to send back every drop of blood to her heart, leaving her face of a ghastly paleness.

“ I am delighted to see you again, dear Grace,” exclaimed Stephen Bradley, greeting her with cousinly warmth as she entered the drawing-room on the ringing of the second bell.

“ Thank you ; I hope your family are all well.” she replied, permitting him to take her hand ; but making no return to his friendly pressure.

“ My father and Eliza are very well ; my mother and Harriet much the same ; all send their kind remembrances,” he replied, turning away with a seemingly careless air.

He had not been prepared for the apparent composure with which she met him ;—such a mood might baffle his schemes ;—a slight trembling, so slight that he almost feared it a fancy not a reality, encouraged him to proceed.

Grace spoke but little during dinner ; Stephen on the contrary endeavoured to make

himself very agreeable, and had he departed immediately on its conclusion his cousin might have pardoned his visit, so far preferable was his conversation to the wretched, silent meals of the last three weeks.

“ Mr. Rolleston is gone to his study to listen to the complaint of some unfortunate tenant, leaving us to a friendly *tête-à-tête*,” observed Stephen on entering the drawing-room.

Grace continued her work in silence ; and drawing a chair he seated himself before her, so that she could not well avoid his scrutiny.

“ I am pained to see you looking so ill, Grace ;” he remarked after answering her questions concerning her parents. “ Your uncle’s tyranny, of which my father informed me, is I fear continued. If I can serve you, count upon me.”

“ Thank you ;” she said looking at him in some surprise, for this show of sympathy was now new to her ; and very strange from him ;

then shaking her head from an inward conviction of his hypocrisy, for he had not dared to meet her eye, she continued with greater coldness. "Do not speak of my uncle's tyranny—I would remember only his kindness."

"That is always your way, Grace; ever grateful and forgiving; but I cannot think of his former kindness, whilst seeing his present harshness, and the patience with which you endure his haughty manner, and sharp rebukes. My blood boils at his cruelty; and I am sorry to find from a few words inadvertently dropped, as we sat at our wine, that he is still resolved on a union from which you must naturally shrink with horror."

"I feared as much; but it will soon be over now," replied his cousin.

"And you will be turned out of his house as your father was, and bid—go starve!"

"Yes; I see all that."

"And can you endure so patiently the not

being his heiress, as his manner if not his words has hitherto promised?" he questioned with wonder and incredulity.

"You do not understand the cause of my wretchedness. If my uncle would only restore me his affection, and grant enough for my parents' support, I should wish for no more. What good would it do me to be heiress of Rolleston Court? It is his—yet he is not happy."

Stephen was silent for some moments, struck with a reply so little in accordance with his own opinions.

"You are a strange girl, Grace. The most generous and unselfish being I ever knew; and it is a pity, and a shame that you should be sacrificed to a stranger, whom you cannot love, and who is not worthy of your regard could he obtain it. From our late conversation I have no doubt of possessing considerable influence with Mr. Rolleston;—were I to exert it in your favor and induce him to abandon this match—"

“Will you? will you do this?” demanded Grace with passionate earnestness, as he paused ere he ended the sentence.

“I will, dear Grace; and I hope with success. But what is to be my reward?” he continued, taking her hand, which had been raised in a pleading attitude.

“My never dying gratitude!—my prayers!—my blessings!” she replied with fervour, forgetting in her hopes all former doubts of his sincerity.

“And that undying gratitude will turn to love, dear Grace;—those blessings rest on a devoted husband’s head;—the hand I save from the pollution of another—shall be mine.”

He would have raised the hand he held to his lips; but she snatched it away with flashing eyes.

“I should have guessed at this. I might have known that you would never show a kindness without the hope of profit or reward.”

“And who does, Grace?” he asked in

passion, but shrinking from her lofty indignation. "If I free you from one whom you hate, have I not a right to claim that hand as a reward?"

"The base and sordid only work for hire,—the noble from more generous motives. I would rather wed with Richard Jolliffe, than with Stephen Bradley; and I would rather be in my grave, than wed with either."

"Beware how you provoke me!" he exclaimed with kindling ire, writhing under her just rebukes. "Have you forgotten our last interview?"

"Could I do so, I might answer differently," she replied trembling at the reference in spite of her indignation.

"Its remembrance should urge you to more prudence;—you understand me;—you dare not meet my glance;—that shudder is a witness to my power. What shall prevent the tongue from telling what the fingers traced?"

You have but one way of escape ;—consent to be mine !”

Grace turned away with silent loathing.

“ How will you bear to be pointed at as one who loved, unwooed?—who loved her sister’s lover?” he continued, laying a strong grasp on her arm as she attempted to rise ; and speaking with slow and thrilling emphasis.

Grace gasped for breath, and fearing for his own sake to inflict further torture, he again resumed his pleading tone.

“ Promise to be mine, dear Grace ; and that secret shall not pass my lips.—Refuse !” he added in his turn, cowering beneath her contemptuous glance—“ refuse ! and what shall prevent my revealing your shame to the whole world ?”

“ Nothing but your interest in keeping it unrevealed,” she replied with recovered firmness.

“ That interest will lead me to divulge, not conceal it. Its revelation will subject you to

Mr. Rolleston's wrath, and entitle me to his gratitude. My revenge will be gratified by your banishment—my interest advanced by your absence, my father being his next heir. Here is a plain debtor and creditor account, since nothing else will content you; and now for your choice."

"The same as before;" she replied, but not as firmly; for her strength was failing beneath the struggle.

"I will not take this as your answer;—think of it till you retire: and then for your own sake give me some token of assent, before we part for the night. I hear the opening of a door, and advancing footsteps; compose yourself—have confidence in my affection, and all will be well."

When Mr. Rolleston entered the room Grace was again bending over her work, and Stephen examining some minerals at a distant table, which he quitted immediately, and devoted himself as he had done during dinner to please

his host, who, on his part, seemed very graciously inclined to be entertained.

Grace said nothing; but worked on mechanically, paying no heed to the conversation of her companions, only thinking of the moment when that secret so long and carefully guarded should be revealed to the whole world.—And whither could she fly to hide her shame?

“You had better go to bed, Grace, instead of shaking as if you had the palsy. You are always tiring yourself at the school,” remarked Mr. Rolleston harshly, after watching her intently for some moments.

His startled niece looked up at his words, as if unconscious of their meaning; then gathering a knowledge of their purport from a repetition of the advice to go to bed, put away her work, and wished him and her cousin ‘Good night.’

Stephen opened the door for her egress—closed it gently—lit her candle, that stood in

the hall ; and then addressed her in a low, lover-like voice.

“ You now see the prudence of fulfilling my hopes, dear Grace ;—you will make me happy.”

“ Never !” exclaimed his cousin with the same contemptuous look which she had cast upon him on his first proposal, taking her candle from his hand.

“ Then Mr. Rolleston shall know all.”

“ That must be as you will ; it would be in vain to appeal to your pity or honor,” replied his cousin, leaning against the banisters for support.

“ Quite vain ;” he repeated in a determined tone.

Grace slowly ascended the stairs, whilst he returned to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER IX.

STEPHEN BRADLEY departed on the following morning without having again seen his cousin, who sent to say that she was too unwell to leave her room ;—departed with the pleasing idea that he was in high favor with Mr. Rolleston, and as his eye wandered over the extensive domain, a dim vision of future ownership floated before him.

Grace's excuse of illness was not a mere excuse ; a torturing headache, and an overpowering lassitude confined her to her apart-

ment during the day ; but a formal enquiry through a servant, and an announcement that if not better on the morrow he should send for medical advice, was all the notice taken of this indisposition by her uncle ; who had a few months since been such a kind and careful nurse. Then he was anxious if the rose on her cheek had faded but a tint ;—now he remarked that cheek grow paler and paler day by day, till not a tinge of pink remained, yet showed no care for her health—no pity for her sufferings. The change was deeply felt ; and still more deeply deplored, increasing her dread of their next meeting. Had Stephen Bradley fulfilled his threat ?

She could not tell. Mr. Rolleston's tone was not harsher than usual, and he gave not the slightest hint of such a communication ; but these were no proofs ;—he might choose to delay the expression of his anger not thinking her strong enough to endure it ;—all that

was certain was, that he went to his study without uttering a reproach.

Faint and wretched;—suffering in mind and body, Grace would gladly have been spared all further pain and emotion for that one day at least; but young Jolliffe having returned the night before hurried over to Rolleston in the morning; and his lover-like protestations of regret at her indisposition compelled her either to make her purposed appeal to his generosity, or allow him to suppose she encouraged hopes, which she never intended to fulfil.

The appeal was made;—but her success was only partial. Richard Jolliffe was considered an amiable young man; that is, he was good-tempered, obliging in little things, and not strikingly selfish in large ones; a fair specimen of the class who acquire general approbation. He was not likely to run into any great vices; but then neither was he

capable of any great virtues. He was a person to pass quietly through life without defrauding or benefitting mankind. Honest in the common acceptation of the word; but without that delicate sense of honor, which makes a high souled feeling the boundary line of its acts, and not the low opinion of the worldly.

As much attached as such a nature would permit, he could scarcely be brought to understand the impossibility of her returning his affection, at least in time, since her uncle approved of his suit;—still less could he comprehend that a generous heart is ever ready to sacrifice its own hopes for the happiness of the object beloved. He would not have used physical force to compel her to become his bride; but the moral force of daily reproaches and wearying importunities he considered a lover's legitimate weapons.

With a mind so constituted Grace could not expect that he would in any way shield her from her uncle's wrath, when explaining his

reasons for declining a union for which he had been so anxious.

Her appeal to his generosity, eloquent from its feeling and earnestness, failed of effect ; there was no corresponding chord in his own bosom to be touched by her high toned pleading. He felt aggrieved, not moved by her words ; and aware that a conference with Mr. Rolleston had immediately succeeded the conference with herself, she sat minute after minute expecting her uncle's entrance, and subsequent burst of anger, till her head grew dizzy with the fear, and she started at the beating of her own heart ; but minute after minute passed away, and no angry reproaches smote her ear. The next day, and the next it was just the same ; and the following one, on which she was to have given her decision, passing in the usual silence, she began to indulge the hope that he had abandoned his purpose, and that by a patient endurance of his harshness she might win back his regard ;

but the storm was only delayed—the clouds were gathering in greater force—the tempest was to fall upon her with overwhelming violence.

“Stay, Grace; I wish to speak with you,” said Mr. Rolleston meeting his niece at the library door.

She felt that the decisive moment was arrived, and re-entered the room in silence, endeavouring but vainly to calm her agitation. She ventured one glance at her uncle as he took a seat beside her;—that glance confirmed her fears; and his cold, stern eye without one touch of feeling or emotion, till he became excited into passion, forbade all hope of sympathy.

“You have been surprised that I did not speak to you at the end of the given month; I waited for a letter, which only arrived this morning. You dismissed young Jolliffe without consulting me; and I should have been justified in sending you away on the instant;

—you should be grateful for my forbearance in still allowing you a choice. Your lover waits but my bidding to renew his addresses. Read the copy of my letter to your father and his reply, before you decide.”

Grace took the letters with a trembling hand and read.

To Henry Trevyllian, Esq.

“You married against my will, and your portion has been poverty and exile;—your children have been reared on charity; and you are now supported by one whose means are already straitened. A union between young Jolliffe and your youngest daughter would renew the splendour of our house, by restoring the family domain to its former extent, and you know how much its curtailment galled me. For months has that daughter been the object of my anxious care, surrounded by every luxury; but she has her father’s rebellious spirit, and refuses to marry

in accordance with my wishes. Persuade or command her to this union ; and from her wedding-day she shall be named my heiress ; and you ensured an annuity of eight hundred a year ; refuse to do this, and Grace quits my roof for ever. Strangers shall inherit my wealth, and you and your children starve, with the weight of my anger still upon you. Write by return of post ; and write with brevity, for I am not to be turned by prayers and professions, written or spoken.

“ Yours, as you act ;

“ THOMAS ROLLESTON.”

Grace opened the reply, which was as follows, with increasing agitation.

“ My dear Uncle,

“ My joy at receiving a letter from you after so long a silence was damped by its contents, and my inability to comply with your request. I did not act contrary to

your wishes from mere wilfulness; love and honor urged me to a union with Grace Lowther; and though many years have been passed in poverty, in exile, in sickness and in suffering, I have never repented that step, however deeply regretting your lasting displeasure, which we would both do much to remove. With such feelings I should not be justified in persuading or commanding my daughter to unite herself to one to whom she is not only indifferent but averse; nay, I must, as a father, most positively forbid her making such a sacrifice from any consideration for my future comfort. Not for me must my child make vows which she cannot perform. Not to gain luxuries for a sick parent shall she condemn herself to a life of wearing misery; that would be to increase, not lighten the pains of death. I entreat you not to subject her to so severe a trial; she is young to bear what older and firmer minds might shrink from enduring; in all beside, I am sure she will consult your

pleasure. I am poor—may soon be in absolute want; and the sick, perhaps the dying, have many fancies, pining for luxuries beyond their reach; but the annuity would be deprived of all its worth if won by the misery of my child, and unaccompanied by a restoration to your regard. Grateful for your kindness to Grace;—still more grateful for your care of my own youth; I must ever remain, under all circumstances,

Your attached nephew,

HENRY TREVYLLIAN."

"I see you are affected by the generous tone of this letter," observed Mr. Rolleston, as Grace concluded its perusal. "But does that generosity inspire no other sentiment than admiration? Does it not inspire you with the spirit of emulation? Does it not say in language not to be withstood—go and do thou the same? Shall your father sacrifice all for you, and will you do nothing for him? Will you

leave him to pine in his sickness, without the comforts which that sickness needs? Nay, will you go and increase his penury?—Still more straiten his already too scanty means, by your presence, when one word from you would give him the skill and the delicacies which his health requires?”

“But he forbids me to say that word,” faltered poor Grace, her heart wrung by her uncle’s appeal; and yet that very heart revolting against the only means by which her father could be saved from beggary.

“And do you plead his generosity as an excuse for your selfishness? Where are the love and gratitude of which you have so often spoken? Does Grace Trevyllian, like the rest of the world, talk nobly and act meanly? Is it for a child to hesitate when her father’s comfort, his very life may depend on her submission? Will you say—‘let him starve—what is that to me?’ Nay, will you go and eat half of his last remaining crust?”

“He shall not starve!—he shall not die!” she exclaimed with a startling wildness in her look and tone. “I have money—it shall be all his! I have hands to work, and will slave to earn him comforts.”

“Money!—it is not yours till you come of age. Hands!—are those hands fit for toil?—Can that fragile form bear all the pains of penury, and all the working of remorse? Has it not wasted day by day at a mere fancied evil? How then can it endure the stern reality of woe? You may stand by the dying; but your presence cannot arrest the stroke of death. You may smile—you may soothe;—but smiling and soothing are not medical skill, and tempting food. He will die, and you will be his murderer;—the victim of a never ending, yet too late repentance.”

“No! no! I can borrow money—I can work;—my cousin Bradley has promised that he shall never want. Do not in pity urge me further on this point?” she continued with

clasped hands. "If you knew what I have suffered for the last month you would feel compassion, and not anger. I cannot love Mr. Jolliffe;—I dare not wed him."

"And why can you not love Mr. Jolliffe?—Why dare you not wed him?" demanded her uncle with a stern, and searching gaze.

She did not speak—her whole frame shook with strong emotion.

Unmoved by her distress, Mr. Rolleston proceeded, kindling into wrath as he continued.

"You dare not answer for very shame—so I will answer for you. You cannot love, and you dare not wed young Jolliffe—for you love another!—that other the once affianced husband of your sister. You gave that love unasked, and un—"

"Spare me! spare me!" exclaimed his niece, covering her face with her hands.

"Ha! then it is true! I thought it might be only the malice of a disappointed suitor, who flatters himself with having deceived me

as to his real character. And if true, why should I spare you, Grace Trevyllian? Because you have loved your sister's affianced husband?"

"He was not her affianced husband when—" said Grace in a low voice; then stopped abruptly, ashamed of the admission which her words conveyed.

"Then it was love at first sight, at that memorable hunt ball," observed her uncle ironically.

"Not so; we had met before."

"Yes, I remember, at Elmwood Lodge. So you fell in love with the poet and biographer of the Ptolemies, in your fourteenth year. A precocity and constancy equally wonderful."

"We have met since then," said Grace in a voice so low and faltering that he could scarcely distinguish her words.

"Where?" he demanded impatiently.

"In Switzerland."

"In Switzerland; Is deceit to be added to unmaidenly forwardness? Why did I never

hear of this before. But I ask no reply, for I would not tempt you to falsehood. And this, was your wonderful sisterly affection? You leave my house to-morrow—I will be no partner in your shame, by giving it my countenance.”

“Shame!” murmured his shrinking, trembling niece.

“Yes shame!” he repeated stamping with passion. “Vex me not further, with tears and entreaties, I am not to be moved by either!” he added, rising to quit the room.

“By your past kindness, I implore you not to depart till you have heard what I have to plead in excuse. Think of me as hardly as you will—I have thought more hardly of myself. If you cannot pity at least be not unjust; you have listened to the accusation against me—justice demands that you should listen to my defence.”

Mr. Rolleston looked for some moments on the earnest pleader, who had started from her

seat to arrest his departure ; then waving her back to the sofa he resumed the chair from which he had risen.

“ Speak then, for I would not be unjust ;—but be brief ; and above all look that you speak the truth.”

“ For more than a year have I resided beneath your roof ;—during that period have you had cause to suspect me, I will not say of a falsehood, but even of a prevarication ?”

“ Perhaps not ; but you must be skilful in deception, or I should have guessed your regard for Dudley.”

“ Forgive me that !—it was the only secret I withheld ; and would that I had died ere it had been revealed.”

“ She who will deceive in one point, will deceive in others ; but say your say, and I will listen and judge justly.”

“ But not in charity—not in affection—” said his niece sadly.

“ Proceed ;” he replied with greater sternness.

Poor Grace ! she was there with that keen, cold eye upon her to tell her tale of woman's love, and, in some sort, for she could not say that her affection was returned, of woman's shame ;—stern, rigid justice the greatest kindness she could hope ; and what would be the fate of any no milder measure measured forth than that. She felt all the difficulty of explanation ; but an impatient movement from her uncle warned her of the danger of delay, so with a desperate courage, and a crimson cheek she broke forth abruptly into her painful and hurried narrative, not venturing till near its close, to look up, and mark the effect of her words.

“ After Mrs. Parker's death the Suttons, instead of returning to England immediately, as had been their first intention, fixed their residence for a season in a retired village in Switzerland. Business of a pressing and embarrassing nature, joined to the illness of a friend, required their presence for a time at

Florence. A trifling indisposition, and the necessity of expedition, prevented my accompanying them ; and I was left under the protection of two trusty English servants, during their absence, which was then expected to be very brief. The day after their departure came Annette, an aged *Sœur de la charité*, long known and highly esteemed by Mrs. Parker, and myself. Two nights before, at a small village among the mountains, ten miles distant, there had been a fearful avalanche. Many had perished in the overwhelming mass—more would have done so ; but for the daring courage of a young Englishman, who, by his individual exertions, still more than by a promise of rewards to others, had rescued several ; not ceasing those exertions till the fate of all had been ascertained.

“ His personal efforts, his eloquent appeals to others, had saved the lives of many, and won him the grateful blessings of all the villagers ; but he himself, the victim of fever brought on

by over exertion, was stretched on the bed of sickness, some thought on the bed of death. The ravings of his delirium were all uttered in a foreign tongue, which none understood, though they knew it to be English ; and the Sœur Annette had come over to me on a mule, by a dangerous mountain path, to implore me to assist in nursing my countryman, the sole earthly hope of his recovery from death or madness, resting on his being soothed by the accents of his native land.

“ Annette, above the opinions of this world, ignorant of its manners, and accustomed from her childhood to deeds of charity, saw no impropriety in such a proceeding ; and blamed me for my momentary hesitation.

“ The peasantry were kind and simple :—none would think evil of my watching with her beside the sick bed of the stranger. And would I for the sake of an idle punctilio risk the life of one so courageous—so noble ? I might go in such a disguise that my own mother should

not know me ; I should pass for one of her sisterhood : and none should ever guess the truth. When once restored to consciousness I might return, as the stranger would then be able to make himself understood by those around him. I yielded to her earnest entreaties. Could I—ought I to have done otherwise ?

“ Leaving word with the servants that I was going to a neighbouring convent at which we stopped in our way to procure the needful disguise, after many difficulties, and some dangers we arrived at the place of our destination. I expected to meet a stranger—I met Mr. Dudley. I expected to hear him raving of those of whom I knew nothing ; but he spoke much of his visit to Elmwood Lodge ; of his admiration of Julia’s beauty and manners ; but he spoke of that admiration as of a feeling past, and gone for ever ; checked, destroyed by her ridicule and want of consideration for his embarrassment.”

“Did he say nothing of Julia’s sister?” asked Mr. Rolleston sarcastically.

His niece flushed a deeper crimson, but answered frankly.

“He did;—he spoke of her with a considerate kindness—a sympathy for her unhappy fortune, that increased the gratitude which he had before awakened by his defence of herself and her favourite.”

“Did he speak only with kindness?—not with love?”

“Only with kindness. How else should he speak of a girl of thirteen?—and such a girl!”

She paused for a moment, then added hastily, with a less steady voice. “I have engaged to tell all the truth; and will not therefore conceal that he spoke of what that girl might be, painting her in his delirium with a heart as noble as his own. He had heard much of her from some partial Italian friends; and was prepared to judge her kindly should they meet.”

“Umph!” said Mr. Rolleston, his usual comment, when not inclined for a more lengthened discussion.

The expectations entertained from my presence were realized—the accents of his native country soothed him in his wildest moods; and he received the food from my hand, which he rejected from all others. For three weeks did the Sœur Annette and myself watch beside his couch, sometimes cheered with hope, sometimes depressed with fear; and then, in answer to our prayers and cares, he was restored to consciousness; still weak and helpless as a child—but sensible. We no longer trembled for his life or his reason; and, leaving him to the care of the charitable sister, I returned with a thankful heart to our secluded cottage, where I was joined on the following day by my friends, whose absence had been unexpectedly prolonged. Within a week we were on our way to England.”

“Do you mean to say that you ceased to be

nurse as soon as your patient was restored to consciousness, when he might have recognized his attendant, and shewn his gratitude?"

"Yes."

"And you made no inquiries after his health?"

"The kind Annette sent me frequent accounts till his perfect recovery saved her further trouble."

"And the young man, following his fair nurse to England, poured forth his gratitude in touching strains."

"No: he never suspected who watched beside him:—no living being knows, or shall know it, but yourself; for the Sœur Annette is in her grave."

"Umph! so the loss then was all on your side, and the gain all on his; you gave him your care, your time, and your heart; and he could not be grateful, being unaware of his obligation."

"The accounts of his mingled courage and

and benevolence from those whom he had saved :—the remembrance of his former kindness, when no one else was kind :—the anxiety for his recovery—the doubts—the hopes—the fears—the watching—the—the—had—” stammered poor Grace.

“ Oh ! I understand all this : he had won your woman’s heart :—a girl has always an excuse for these things, either in her own folly or her idol’s perfections. Your gratitude is astonishing ! You embalm a memory, as the Egyptians embalmed their bodies, and preserve it for years. When did you next meet ? ”

“ The day of the hunt ball at C—.”

“ At the ball ? ”

“ I believe, but am not certain, that we had unconsciously taken shelter under the same shed in the morning ; but he made no allusion to the circumstance. As he handed me to the carriage after the ball he declared his intention of seeing me on the morrow ; but he did not reach Marsfield till after my departure. Then

came Julia's letter. You can now understand the obstinacy of my pleading that would take no denial—you can comprehend why I mingled as little as possible, without exciting suspicion, in any society where we were likely to meet ; and will cease to blame my unwearied endeavours to reconcile every difference, and urge Julia to a course of conduct worthy of his regard. Their happiness was all my thought ;—how to promote that happiness my first endeavour. Something of all this you may understand : but you cannot tell—you cannot guess how I struggled day by day, not only to conceal, but to subdue my former weakness ;—how I prayed that they should be happy, let my fate be what it would ; and that I might have strength to fulfil all other duties, instead of yielding to my own selfish sorrow. My pallid cheeks and failing strength were the effects of that struggle ; but they were happy, and none guessed the truth, save one—cold, base, and calculating—his penetration sharpened by his

thirst for wealth ;—and the only bribe to win his silence was my hand. Think what I endured at this announcement, knowing him capable of fulfilling his threat of disclosure ! The bribe he required was refused—once in London, and once here ;—and his threat has been fulfilled, the secret revealed that should have gone with me to the grave. Judge me not hardly—judge in mercy ; if I have greatly erred ; believe that I have also greatly suffered.”

Mr. Rolleston listened to her earnest appeal for a merciful judgment in silence. As he thought over the whole of her conduct ;—the pressing nature of the circumstances which compelled her, in common humanity, to play the nurse ;—her disguise and departure at the first possible moment ;—the generous anxiety which she had ever shown for the happiness of Julia and Ernest ;—the boldness with which she had pleaded their cause, against herself ;—the constant guard maintained over looks and words, so that even his almost superhuman

penetration had been baffled;—the omission in her narrative of a circumstance, which would have acquitted her of having bestowed her love on one who prized it not; and the care which she had ever shown amid all her own grief for the comfort and pleasure of himself, and those around her, he felt that admiration and not censure was the fitting feeling towards that noble and unselfish spirit. And when he thought of Dudley's behaviour at the ball—his scarcely leaving her side—his promise to see her on the morrow—his promptness to save her at Richmond, and his unwillingness to be thanked—his looks when resigning her to his arms—his passionate expressions of affection and thankfulness, as he snatched her from destruction, which Stephen had related, but Grace, from delicacy, concealed, with many before inexplicable points in Julia's manner, he formed a guess at the real state of the case, not many removes from the truth; but to avow his admiration of her self-devotion, or hint at what

he believed, would have militated strongly against his plans ; and when Grace, surprised at his silence, ventured a timid glance to ascertain how he had borne her relation, he only answered coldly :—

“I will not increase your pangs by harsh rebukes.”

“Thank you, dear uncle,” murmured Grace with a grateful humility, that touched him, though he would not show that he had been moved by her words.

“But if I add not to your shame and remorse, Grace, I would still appeal to your womanly pride and filial love. Ernest Dudley seeks you not ; and your father, unless you consent to my wishes, may die of want.”

“Do not despise me,” said Grace, her voice broken by sobs—her face bent low on her knees—her whole attitude one of deep humility. “Do not despise me ; but the struggle of many months has been in vain. We shall meet no more ; or if we should, he shall learn

nothing from my manner," she added proudly; "but at the present moment, with my present feelings, I cannot—dare not wed another."

"Then you quit Rolleston Court for ever; and your father—"

"Oh no! you will not be so cruel; you have shown me the affection of a parent, you will not now regard me as a stranger, or an enemy," she exclaimed, interrupting him with streaming eyes.

"Listen, girl! and learn that I am not to be turned. The fondness of which you speak was only a means to gain dominion over you, and rule you to my will, let that will be what it might. I encircled you with splendour—I gave you the habits of expense, that the dread of poverty might induce submission."

"I will not believe this; I will still be grateful for that kindness, nor think it an artful mean to a cruel end."

"Believe on this point as you will," he replied apparently unmoved by her generous

indignation ; “only believe not that I can be induced to abandon a plan essential to my peace, by the entreaties of one, who, debased by the wealth she professes to despise, and the splendour for which she refuses to pay the required price, meanly implores permission to remain where her presence is no longer welcome.”

“You cannot mean this,” said his niece colouring at the cruel insult. “You cannot believe me to be so base. Settle your property on whom you will ; only leave me your affection ; and bestow a little of your great abundance on my father, and I will be your slave—your very slave till death.”

“I tell you, child, I will give nothing to your father, until parted from his wife,” cried Mr. Rolleston fiercely. “I have heard your secret—now hear mine ; but give a hint of its purport to another, and my enmity shall pursue you, as it pursued your mother. Here is the

secret of all my acts. You cannot have forgotten our first meeting in this room."

Grace bowed her head in acquiescence; his look at that moment, as he stood before her in his wrath, recalled the scene to her remembrance, though so many years had elapsed since its enactment.

"Your mother knelt before me pleading as you did but now; yet I refused her prayers, and mocked her misery. No other in the land could have withstood her beauty and humble supplications. And what had steeled my heart against her eloquence? In my youth, I loved her mother—and she jilted me."

Grace started with surprise and terror; with surprise for she had never heard a hinted suspicion of the fact; with terror from the mode of its announcement; for mingled love and scorn—the struggles of pride and passion—the strife of his whole existence seemed reacted in that one moment.

“ Yes, jilted me !” he repeated after a moment’s pause, “ though she gave to my rejection a milder term. I was not discarded because she loved another, for she knew not that other then, and remained single for years ; I was not discarded from ambition, for him she wedded was of poorer birth and fortune, and finally reduced to almost penury. No ; but I was discarded—my devotion scorned—my love rejected from prudence, as she said—a dread of my fiery temper ; and he who warned her of this temper was the father of Ernest Dudley. She wept as she bade me leave her ; but those very tears were a fresh injury, increasing my anguish at her loss. It was not to your father’s portionless bride I objected, as all supposed ; it was to Grace Lowther, the daughter of her who had thrown me off. My consent in the first instance was owing to my ignorance of the fact, on account of her father’s change of name. This confession must convince you of the inutility of further entreaties—

the impossibility of your remaining longer beneath my roof. I mocked at the prayers of her kneeling daughter—I brook not the persuasions of her rebellious grand-child, now that she knows the wrong inflicted by her grandmother. The temper which she dreaded is as fiery now as in my youth—years of suffering have not subdued the haughty spirit, that only bowed to her. You go to-morrow to your parents ; and they and you are henceforth aliens to my heart and home.”

Before the shuddering Grace, who had been fascinated by fear to gaze on his features, convulsed by passion, could reply, he had quitted the room ; and she was left alone to ponder on this tale of lingering love, and lasting enmity. But she was not left to ponder long, the violent ringing of a bell, and a succeeding bustle with a confusion of tongues told of some occurrence as rare, as that sudden tumult and confusion.

A thrilling dread came over her—she rushed into the hall—questioned a passing servant ;

and had her dread confirmed. Mr. Rolleston had been found by his valet lying on the floor of his study, perfectly insensible. That haughty spirit which would not bend to man or woman, nor succumb to mental agony whilst strength remained, had now surrendered to the weakness of the body, which could no longer bear the struggles of the mind. For more than forty years he had brooded over his wrong in silence—now he had spoken of that wrong to the child of her child—he had repaid to her daughter the pangs which she had caused to him.

But she was avenged for his undying anger ; the communication had brought back the past upon him with all the power of the present, till he was no longer able to endure the torture. It was some time before he opened his eyes ; and when he did, those eyes wandered over the face of his anxious niece, who was kneeling beside him, with a fearful vacancy of expression.

It was not till after he had been blooded by the hastily summoned surgeon that Mr. Rolleston was sufficiently recovered from his alarming fit to understand what had occurred; and then his bodily weakness was too great to allow of any voluntary exertion. All that long and weary night did Grace watch beside his bed—moistening his parched lips—smoothing his rumpled pillow—speaking gentle and soothing words; and if he did not thank her for this, he, at least, did not refuse her services, whilst the housekeeper averred, and the grateful girl hoped and believed, that his eye brightened as she bent over him, and followed her as she retreated behind the curtain, that she might not disturb his rest.

In the morning, the surgeon pronounced him out of immediate danger; but hinted at a relapse unless his patient's mind were kept perfectly calm. Any agitation, might cause another fit; and Mr. Rolleston, besides always wishing to be thought better than he really was,

for it hurt his pride to appear subdued by bodily pain, was not the most submissive person in the world to the orders of a doctor, or the wishes of a nurse. The surgeon not only knew his patient's constitution, but his temper; and prescribed accordingly.

"Why are you still here, when I bade you go?" said Mr. Rolleston to his niece, sitting very erect in his large arm chair, having insisted on leaving his bed the third day after his alarming seizure.

"I could not leave you whilst so ill, dear uncle;" replied Grace affectionately, though grieved at the question, having hoped to hear no more of her departure.

"Since you have staid, you may make my will;—there are pens and paper in that desk," observed her uncle coldly.

"Certainly if you wish it; but had you not better defer it for a few days, and then send for your solicitor? I fear you will find it too great an exertion."

“ I am the best judge of that ; and hope I am still master in my own house, though you would fain be mistress. I will have no delay lest another attack should deprive me of the power of disposing of my property. Write as I dictate ; and the steward, butler, and valet, can be the witnesses.”

Grace obeyed in silence, though much hurt at his words ; and it was wonderful to mark the clearness and distinctness with which one just risen from a sick bed could enumerate and devise the whole of his large possessions, some in land, some in the funds, and much in various companies ; but it was still more wonderful, and far more sad, to mark the spirit by which he was actuated whilst making his last will and testament.

First came legacies to his old servants and pensioners ; and here he showed himself, as he had ever done, a considerate, if not a gracious master ; then followed bequest after bequest to charities and societies, till little remained of his

splendid fortune to be bequeathed, but Rolleston Court and its surrounding domain.

Here he paused for a moment ; and Grace listened with breathless suspense, then with a deep sigh, as he left the estate, which had descended from sire to son, with some little abatement, from the time of the conquest, to be an asylum for the insane. In conclusion, Stephen Bradley was left executor, with a legacy of ten thousand pounds for his trouble ; whilst not another friend or relation was named.

Grace wrote in silence and in sorrow ;—she felt all that the testator intended she should feel except anger ; but she uttered no reproach—deigned no entreaty.

“ Read it over ;” said Mr. Rolleston when she had concluded.

She obeyed without failing a word—called the witnesses—folded, and sealed it as he directed ; and then placing it beside him, resumed her seat.

“ Now you will depart, I conclude, without further demur,” observed Mr. Rolleston with a fever-spot of scarlet in his before ashy cheek.

“ Now I may plead more strongly to remain, since you cannot attribute that pleading to interested motives.”

“ I have said you shall go—and you shall,” exclaimed the sick man, with a vehemence which alarmed his anxious nurse.

“ Be calm, dear uncle ; and I will go ;—go when you please, without a murmur. Only let me remain till you no longer need my care—till I see you restored to health. You are still ill—very ill ;—and the slightest agitation may cause a relapse. Let me remain here but one month,” said Grace, taking the sick man’s hand in hers—a hand that was hot and feverish.

“ Do you wish for another month’s probation ?” asked Mr. Rolleston sarcastically, withdrawing his hand, with a gesture of dis-

pleasure." You shall not stay here a month."

"Only a fortnight then," said Grace more timidly, shocked at his violence.

"Will you promise to go at the end of that time without a murmur? without an entreaty?—without making a scene at the leave taking?"

"Yes; if you then say to me—go;—I will go without a word; but I shall go in sorrow."

"So be it then; but think not that I shall change," said her uncle, sinking back in his chair exhausted by his late exertions, yielding, as it seemed, through inability, and not through disinclination from further opposition.

CHAPTER X.

THE fortnight had expired, and Grace entered the chamber of the invalid with mingled hope and fear. Every hour had seen an amendment in his health, at least so he averred, and he had the night before announced his intention of dining down stairs on the succeeding day but one. His niece's care for his comfort had been unremitting during that period; and as he had not only accepted her attentions, but some times rewarded them with a smile, declaring that she was an invaluable nurse, the hope of

being permitted to remain had gradually grown into an expectation ; yet she did not enter his presence on this once dreaded morning without some embarrassment, and a timid glance to learn her fate from the expression of his countenance. That expression was more bland and gracious than usual ; and the breakfast was the gayest breakfast which the uncle and niece had enjoyed for many weeks. The reverse when it came was the more astounding.

“ I am strong enough now to read the paper myself,” he observed, taking it from Grace’s hands, as she was going to commence its perusal aloud, her usual morning task since his late illness. “ And as you will doubtless have many orders to give, and many things to arrange before your departure, besides taking leave of the Boltons and your school, I shall not expect to see you till tea time. The carriage will be at the door to-morrow morning at nine ; and John and Sarah will attend you to your parents ;—how beggars will receive a

beggar, who might have been rich, and made them rich too,—time will discover.”

“ Must I then go ?” asked Grace, shocked at this abrupt and unexpected announcement.

“ Remember your promise. If you have cherished other hopes it was no fault of mine.”

Grace took a step towards the door ; and then turning back, looked wistfully into his face.

“ Go !” he repeated more peremptorily ; “ and give immediate orders for your packing, which may take some time ; you came with a scanty wardrobe—you will depart with a well furnished one.”

His niece coloured at the sneer.

“ I would neither seem mean in retaining, nor ungrateful in declining your presents. Is it your wish that I should return them ? Jewels and splendid garments ill suit my future condition,” she replied, roused to indignation by his ungenerous remark.

“ Having given them, they are no longer

mine ; and to return them would be an insult. Those jewels may buy bread in the hour of need."

His niece bowed—she could not speak ; and quitted the room with a stately step, but a heavy heart.

After giving the requisite orders to the astonished Sarah with as much composure as she could command, and that was but little ; she descended to the drawing-room for the purpose of collecting her music and sketches.

The sun was shining full into the splendid apartment as she entered ; and a deeper pang of sorrow shot across her as she gazed around. She had never before understood how completely Rolleston Court had become her home. Its gloom, which had appalled her on her first entrance and in her late moments of despondency, was gone ; and she felt as the warm-hearted ever feel at leaving a spot where she had listened to the words, and met the looks of affection. Every act of kindness received from

her uncle came back on her mind as vividly as when performed ; but only to heighten her grief at their present estrangement, and coming separation. Her eyes wandered slowly round the room, resting on every well-known object with the painful thought that she should never see it more ; and then she hid her face in her hands to shut out the gladsome sun, whose brightness seemed to mock her sorrow.

“ If you please ma’am Mr. Rolleston bade me give you this case that you might have it packed up,” said a servant entering at the moment.

The case contained the miniature of herself—that very miniature which Lord Brotherton had proposed to adorn with a coronet ; and which had been painted for her uncle at his express desire.

“ He not only scorns my affection—he will not even retain my portrait,” thought poor Grace, her eyes flashing indignantly, through the tears that filled them, as she dashed the

miniature on the ground with a sudden movement of passion. A trifle will sometimes overturn the composure which has withstood sterner trials. Grace had parted from her uncle without shedding a tear; but this little incident unnerved her, and she wept for several minutes with all the violence of strong and unrestrained emotion.

It was a sorrowful walk, that last walk through the grounds of Rolleston Court to pay her last visit to her school, and take leave of the Boltons, whose regret at her departure grieved, yet soothed her; but, true to her promise to her uncle, she uttered no murmur—used no entreaty when she joined him at tea; and he, without taking any notice of her eyes being red with weeping, talked gaily on indifferent subjects, as if quite forgetful of the approaching separation. His niece exerted herself to converse as gaily and indifferently as himself; but her conversation was dull and spiritless; and rather before his usual hour for retiring Mr.

Rolleston signified that he was weary, and would fain go to bed.

Grace rose, and stood before him silent and motionless, her pale lips quivering with the emotion, which she could not entirely repress.

“There is to be no scene, Grace. Good night!” said Mr. Rolleston sternly, extending his hand.

She pressed that hand; but the pressure was not returned. The good night died in her throat, and she left the room abruptly without venturing to look back.

“And we have parted—parted for ever! and as strangers! He neither kissed, nor blessed me as he was wont to do each night in former times,” murmured poor Grace, when left alone in her own apartment.

That night she cried herself to sleep as she had so often done in her little garret at Elmwood Lodge; but that sleep was heavy and unrefreshing; and when the morning light came in at her window she started up from a

fearful dream, and wept again at the remembrance of her last night's suffering. Then, after a while, she arose and wrote with a trembling hand a note to her uncle, which was left with the housekeeper to be delivered on the following day, in which, after thanking him in the most grateful terms for his former kindness, she entreated him should he be ill again to send for her, promising to come and go at his bidding without delay or entreaty.

As she reached her uncle's door, Grace paused for a moment to listen if he were stirring; but no sound came from within; and with a sob, which she vainly endeavoured to repress, she passed along the corridor.

Her sob was echoed—she turned hastily round, with a gleaming of hope; but that hope was delusive—it was only the formal housekeeper, who was weeping like a child. Grateful for the sympathy, Grace held out her hand, which the honest woman pressed respectfully, uttering many regrets for her

departure ; and many wishes for her future welfare.

Nor was this the only mark of esteem that pained yet pleased her on this melancholy morning. On entering the hall she found all the domestics assembled to bid her farewell, and wish her health and happiness.

One of the most timid had suggested that such an exhibition of regard might displease Mr. Rolleston ; but the bolder calmed such fears by the assertion that he would know nothing of the matter, from the early hour of her departure ; and that all being of the same mind there would be no one to carry tales. Her ever kind and gracious manner had won their hearts ; and they mourned the absence of one ready to assist their wants, and plead their cause ; and whose influence had softened Mr. Rolleston's harshness. Grace saw the friendly array with mingled pain and surprise, and pleasure. It was a mark of regard with which she would on some accounts have gladly

dispensed ; but it was too gratifying to be despised ; so, checking her tears, she said a kindly word to each as she passed through the hall, and entered the carriage which drove away at a rapid pace.

There was not a dry eye among those she left.

She looked up at her uncle's window, but the shutters were still closed ; and then she looked out over the splendid park through her half blinding tears. It was a glorious summer day, all light and sunshine ; she contrasted it with the dull drizzling rain on her arrival, now nearly two years since ; and as her eyes fell on that fatal knoll, that seemed standing more proudly out as if in flaunting triumph, she sank back in disgust at the brightness, so little in accordance with her present feelings.

As the village of Nettlefield was two days' journey from Rolleston, she had more than sufficient time to speculate on the reception which she should receive from her parents,

whom her uncle had written, announcing her coming. The fond cares lavished on her childhood, and her father's letter to Mr. Rolleston were points on which she dwelt with hope and pleasure ; but there was a dark side to the picture, which forced itself on her remembrance. So many years of absence must have deadened in some degree the affection from which she was still inclined to hope so much ; during those long and weary years she had never received a letter, and the same silence had been continued since her parents' return. Should she be met with indifference—with reproach—or with eager fondness ? Should she sport in the warmth and gladness of a father's—a mother's love ; or creep slowly to her grave beneath neglect or harshness ? A few minutes would decide the point, for the carriage had entered the village, and soon after stopped before a pretty old-fashioned cottage, having its latticed windows clustered round with a profusion of creepers, and adorned in

front with a gay little flower-garden, bounded by a broad gravel walk, with an arbour at each end.

The cottage was small, but everything around was most exquisitely neat—almost too neat Grace thought: it looked rather formal, and might be a type of its inhabitants.

With health and spirits broken by her late trials, she shrank from the approaching interview.

The carriage could not draw up to the door, but the steps were let down; and Grace passed through the garden and up the gravel walk with a faltering step and beating heart; but no sooner had she entered the porch than she found herself in the arms of her mother, whose broken expressions of delight, on meeting after so long a separation, banished all fears of coldness and indifference. Nor was the reception she received from her father less affectionate; even he tottered from his couch

to meet her, and Grace felt at once that she was loved, and might yet be happy.

The explanations following this meeting were satisfactory to all. Grace had received no letter from India, because Mrs. Bradley and the Gunnings had more than hinted that postage was an expense which they were not inclined to defray; and that to write, unless on business, was a "custom more honored in the breach than the observance;" and she had received none since their return, in consequence of Mr. Bradley's advice, who feared their writing might irritate Mr. Rolleston. Instead of blaming, they approved of her rejecting young Jolliffe; whilst Bradley's high yet scarcely exaggerated encomiums of his favourite cousin had prepared them to meet her with all the warmth of their former affection: for their hearts were unchilled by time or care; and Grace soon felt that she had found a home where peace and confiding love

would greatly mitigate, if it did not entirely remove, her grief at her uncle's estrangement. She regretted not the splendour of Rolleston Court, as that uncle had expected ; and when she saw her father gradually gaining health and strength, and learnt that by late arrangements he would possess a clear income of three hundred a year, her own health and spirits also revived ; and if thoughts of Dudley would sometimes intrude to disturb her bosom's calm, her parents never guessed that beneath the smiles and cheerfulness that gladdened their hearth lay a deep and secret sorrow.

Here was both a field and a reward for her exertion in the affection that repaid her cheerful activity ; and every succeeding hour made her more dear to her parents, who ever saw her depart with regret, and listened to her returning steps with pleasure ; whilst the poor blessed her for her gentle sympathy and readiness to aid, though that aid was of necessity very limited in its degree ; but, humble as

were her gifts, the manner of bestowing them endowed them with a value in the eyes of the receiver beyond the more costly dainties of the rich;—it was not alone her hand that gave—it was her heart.

In giving, whilst gratifying our own feelings, we too often overlook, and thence outrage the feelings of others; and yet we grumble if the poor are not grateful.

Trevyllian was not a man of talent, or great decision, of character—had he been either, though he might have more easily repaired his losses, he would probably not have borne those losses with such cheerful patience, for the mind eager to do, is generally too quick and impatient to bear; but he was kind, generous, and honourable; and, if he did not dazzle in society, was fitted to make the happiness of a fireside; whilst his wife was a softened likeness of himself. Never, as he truly said, had they repented of their union; and if time had faded the freshness and the beauty of their

youth, his iron grasp had not hardened their hearts. They could appreciate Grace's generous and unselfish character, for it assimilated to their own; and she whose beau ideal of happiness had ever been a quiet home, with the affection of its united circle, now felt herself in her right place. Her accomplishments, instead of being laid aside were exercised more readily and frequently; she sang more sweetly in that little cottage room, and trod more lightly over the velvet lawn, than she had ever done in the crowded saloon, or the splendid ball-room.

The village afforded no society except Trevyllian's friend, Dr. Whiston, a skilful surgeon, but silent and eccentric; all its other inhabitants were of the humbler classes. With their rector, a good, and zealous clergyman, they were on friendly terms; but as he resided at his living four miles off, Nettlefield being only a chapel of ease, they could not meet as frequently as they would otherwise have done;

but more distant visitors often came to enliven their solitude. Bradley thought little of the twenty miles between Elmwood Lodge and Nettlefield when the reward of his ride was a warm welcome from his favorite Grace; so he often came over and took his bed, besides despatching baskets of dainties to tempt the appetite of the still feeble Trevyllian, deeming himself more than repaid by Grace's gratitude, and her laughing assertion that she looked upon Elmwood as her market, and on him as her steward and housekeeper. The increasing ill temper of his wife often drove him to take refuge with Eliza (now Mrs. Marshall) and the Trevyllians; who felt, and readily admitted the greatness of their obligation for his kindness to themselves and youngest child.

But Mr. Bradley did not always come alone. One day, about three months after Grace's arrival, he brought over the Earl of Hillbury, to renew his acquaintance with the daughter, and be introduced to her parents.

“ I flatter myself, Miss Trevyllian, that you feel considerable interest in my family concerns,” began his lordship having obtained a *tête-à-tête* with Grace, by luring her into the garden to tell him the name of a flower.

“ I do, indeed, my lord ; and judge from your manner that you have some pleasing intelligence to communicate.”

“ You judge correctly ; we have the means of proving the deed which deprived us of our property to be a forgery ; and hope shortly to be restored to our former prosperity.”

“ I am delighted to hear it,” cried Grace with friendly zeal.

“ There is a candour united with your warmth, Miss Trevyllian, which, whilst it increases my esteem, emboldens me to put a question, which I am aware nothing but a father’s anxiety for his son’s happiness can excuse. Will this change in Leverton’s prospects effect any change in the views and wishes which you formerly entertained ?”

“None whatever, my lord ;” replied Grace frankly and decidedly, eager to remove the earl’s embarrassment. “Now, as then, I regard Lord Leverton as a friend—from our long acquaintance almost as a brother ;—less I trust he will not—more I feel that he can never be.”

“Thank you for this noble candour, Miss Trevyllian; Leverton, though a rejected lover, left England with the resolution of acquiring a fortune and persuading you to share it ; and as our hopes will show forth in manner, if not in speech, he thought you might have understood his purpose ; and pardon me if I say, relied on this resolution.”

“A belief, which, if I read your lordship’s embarrassment correctly, has lately given him more pain than pleasure,” said Grace with an arch smile. “I think I am not wrong in supposing that Lord Leverton has transferred his allegiance to another ; or, to speak correctly, has met with one more worthy of his regard ; and has thus learnt the simple truth, that had

he not pitied my situation at Elinwood Lodge, and been thwarted, and piqued by Mrs. Bradley, he would never have fancied his regard for me to be of a warmer nature than mere friendship."

"You are not far from the truth on one point, though I will never allow that he has found, or could find one more worthy his regard; but since Grace Trevyllian will not be my daughter-in-law, I am happy to say that he has chosen the one who ranks next to her in my estimation. But do not suppose that Leverton is as yet engaged to another, I speak only of his secret feelings; and had your answer been less decided, he would have fulfilled his implied, if not expressed engagement to yourself."

"A resolution, which, however honorable in his lordship, must have entailed misery on two, and probably a third, for true affection is too clear sighted to be deceived or satisfied without full measure in return; and giving his

hand, whilst his heart was another's, would have been rather an injustice than a noble sacrifice. May I ask the lady's name? though I think I could guess that too."

"Your generous desire for Leverton's happiness, without one touch of wounded vanity, commands my perfect confidence," replied his lordship with increasing admiration. "The lady is Miss Logan—a warm friend of yours;—indeed my son excuses his fickleness by asserting that it was this circumstance which first attracted his regard."

"I will believe any thing that it may please Lord Leverton to assert on this point," said Grace with a happy smile; but I will not have him accused of fickleness. Pray assure him that I never considered him bound to me in the slightest degree by any thing he said or thought at our last meeting; and that no one more truly rejoices in his future prospects. Emma Logan deserves his regard, and he need neither blush for his choice, nor for any

fancied slight to me. I only claim to be considered as the friend of both ; and to be met without reluctance or embarrassment. Tell him this my lord ; or if you think it will content him better, and not be indecorous, I will write and tell him so myself."

" Do ; that will remove every scruple, and make him quite happy ; whilst it will increase my debt of gratitude for your frankness, and good advice on a former occasion. From your guessing the lady, I anticipate that Leverton will not plead in vain, though the idea of his engagement to you has of late rendered his manner unequal and abrupt."

" Excuse me, my lord ; a woman can keep a secret," she replied, her lips compressed with a show of gravity, whilst her bright eyes were full of a playful mischief.

" Keep a secret with the tongue, and tell it with the eyes. Commend me to the secrecy of your sex !" said his lordship laughing. " I wish I had another son deserving your affection

and capable of winning it ;—but perhaps some other.—”

“ I am too busy keeping house—nursing papa—amusing mama—weeding my flower garden—and quarrelling with dear, old Doctor Whiston, to think of any thing else,” replied the blushing Grace, returning towards the house.

CHAPTER XI.

It was a day in August—a day of light and shadow—cloud and sunshine—typifying the course of human existence—its

“ Hopes and fears—its smiles and tears.”

The fearful said it would rain—the hopeful said it would not—whilst Grace Trevyllian, paying little heed to either prediction, trod lightly across the village common on her return from a sick cottager, to whom she had been carrying grapes, with a basket in one hand, an open book in the other.

A chaise approached at a rapid pace, and without looking up she hastened on to get clear of the dust. Her way, after crossing the high road, lay over a field ; and as she paused to unfasten the gate, she heard the carriage stop—the steps let down—and a hurried tread behind her.

She turned—and saw Ernest Dudley ; who greeted her with an animated joy, which, for the instant, prevented embarrassment on either side ; then the events at their last meeting and all that had since occurred rushed back on her mind ; and to hide the emotion caused by the recollection, Grace suddenly grew coldly formal ; and Ernest, hurt at the change, and catching the infection, lost his former animated and happy expression. They had not met since the water party to Richmond ; and then he was the affianced husband of her sister, who had since played the jilt, and eloped with another. He had a right to expect that she should thank him for having saved her from imminent danger, if

not from death ; and considering the wrong inflicted by her sister, she should at least receive him with friendly warmth ; but Grace felt both at the moment beyond her power. She could not guess the purpose of his coming—she remembered Stephen Bradley's accusation—the tale wrung from her by her uncle's rebukes, and, overwhelmed by these recollections, walked on at a rapid pace, as if anxious to get quit of her companion, never venturing to look into that companion's face, and making curious replies to some of his remarks.

“ I have the pleasure of informing you that your friends the Rawdons and Miss Logan were quite well when I left Naples, a few days since,” he observed, after enquiring of her own health, and that of her parents with a friendly interest, which she did not appear to appreciate.

“ Do you know them ?” asked Grace in surprise, venturing a timid glance, which was instantly withdrawn.

“ Intimately ; I saw a great deal of them a few months ago.”

“ Then you bring me letters ;” she exclaimed with more animation.

“ I was too impatient to allow them time for writing ; coming over, at a moment’s notice, on what most concerns my future happiness, and travelling with the greatest possible speed.”

Grace looked away, he thought in vexation ; and he stammered out some incoherent apologies for not bringing letters, to which she made no reply ; and this, with the observation that it was likely to rain, to which she answered— ‘ Yes very fine indeed !’—somewhat to his amazement, brought them to the wicket, leading into the flower-garden before the cottage.

“ Do you live here ?” he asked seeing that she stopped.

“ Yes,” she replied ; but what she added was too low to be distinguished.

“ There was an awkward silence ; which was

broken by his saying in a melancholy tone: "I see, Miss Trevyllian, that my presence is displeasing to you; but, pardon me, if I entreat you to bear with it a little longer. I have hurried from Naples with little rest, for the sole purpose of explaining the past, and pleading my hopes for the future; if you tell me that my hopes have been too presumptuous I will not pain you by my importunity. Grant me but a few minutes' conversation, and do not fear that I shall ever intrude again. I will not tax your hospitality so heavily as to ask permission to enter the house, nor must I detain you here in the burning sun;—beneath the shade of that arbour, perhaps you will listen to my defence."

"Certainly," faltered Grace; and they took their seats without further comment.

Though Dudley had requested this interview for the purpose of explanation, he felt much difficulty in beginning, a difficulty increased by Grace's silence, and averted face. He feared

his tale was to be told to no friendly listener ; and in his embarrassment began just where he should have ended ; by which course his hearer became as confused as himself.

“ Those few words when I had the happiness of saving you—the involuntary expressions of my devoted attachment and fervent gratitude for your preservation—have I fear never been forgiven ;” he remarked abruptly, some slight portion of reproach mingling with his sadness.

“ I remember now, we have not met since ; and I should have thanked you. I was much obliged ;” stammered poor Grace, ashamed of her silence, yet still more ashamed of her words, which showed little gratitude and less politeness.

To tell her preserver that she had forgotten his services, till he reminded her of them ; and then to add that—she was much obliged for the preservation of her life, the term she would have used had he procured her a book, or presented her with a flower, was, she felt,

sufficient to convict her of the blackest ingratitude, and the most egregious folly ; but the words were uttered, and she could not recall them, though aware that they had deeply wounded her hearer.

“ I did not allude to the circumstance to compel you to profess yourself obliged for my poor service,” he answered proudly ; but merely meant to express a fear that I had offended you by expressions, which could only be excused by a detail of former events and feelings. I would speak of our first meeting. Will you listen to a tale which may seem tedious, since I must be my own hero?—The history of a heart long destined to painful struggles ; and now doomed to a darker disappointment just as a brighter hope had dawned ?”

A slight inclination of the head signified her assent ; and he continued, at first with considerable embarrassment, but, after a few sentences, with a fervency and feeling that could not fail to command the admiration and interest of his hearer.

“ Reared in seclusion, with some knowledge of books, more particularly the works of the ancients : but profoundly ignorant of the living world, my ideas of women were highly poetical. Julia Trevyllian appeared to me the embodied dream of a poet—the personification of beauty ; and my simple enthusiasm endowed her with a mind as perfect as her form. Shy and awkward in society ; and beyond the simple frankness of the boy, without having attained the self-possession of the man, my admiration was expressed in a manner more than sufficiently ludicrous to excuse the ridicule which it awakened ; but under that awkward showing was a devotion as pure and daring as in former days spurred gallant knights to noble deeds. Julia saw not this enthusiasm, or could not understand it ; she was not formed to comprehend the heroic. Reared in the world, and for the world, she had a keen sense of the ludicrous, with a worldling’s dread of ridicule ; and whilst her vanity was flattered by my boyish admira-

tion, which she fostered and increased for her own pleasure, she was ever ready to join in the laugh occasioned by the uncouth way in which that admiration was expressed.

“ I am neither going to defend my biography of the Ptolemies, nor my verses, both were silly enough ; but the first was not from any desire to show my learning, only the simple wish of bestowing on others the information which I had found so much pleasure in acquiring ; the last was not the studied effusion of a poet’s vanity ; but the outbreking of a boyish, yet sincere admiration ;—the unworldly homage, of an unworldly heart. The motive should have saved me from her ridicule, and with a generous nature would have done so. Two only were grave amid that crowd of laughers—Mr. Bradley and yourself ; the circumstance has never been forgotten ;—none but a shy and awkward youth like myself can tell how I prized that silent sympathy. To be laughed at is no pain to some, and I myself heed it not now ; but

then it was perfect agony, and at that moment I could have laid down my life for you or your cousin. Now I can laugh at my folly as freely as others; but what in our manhood we admit to have been a trifle, may have been felt as a painful wound in our boyish days.

“From that moment Julia’s spell was broken; I was no longer her slave,—not even her subject. I am not called on to confess the share that wounded vanity had in my freedom,—I am afraid it was the principal agent of my release from her thralldom.

“In two days I quitted Elmwood Lodge; but in the interim I had been deeply struck with your constant affection, and spirited defence of your old favourite, and your passionate grief for his loss; nor was I less surprised, when you sat by my side watching the sketch, to find you possessed of a depth of thought so far beyond your years, joined to a singularly childish simplicity, and single heartedness on all points of feeling and affection. I will not say

that I left my heart in your keeping; you were too young; but I sincerely pitied you, subjected as you were to Mrs. Bradley's tyranny, and departed with the conviction that you possessed a mind above the common order, which only needed time and care to fit you to be not only the soother of man's troubles; but the sharer of his noblest aspirations. Such were the impressions with which I quitted Elmwood Lodge, impressions shared by my father, though perhaps coloured a little more soberly; and often in my fancy did you stand before me as I had seen you stand with the dying spaniel in your arms; bold from affection in the moment of danger, gentle, from the same feeling, when danger had passed away. I next heard of you in Italy with Mrs. Parker. And how did I hear of you? All who knew were loud in your praise. The feeling heart, the thoughtful mind had been developed by her tender care, till the lovely bud had expanded into a rich blossoming. At Florence, at Rome,

at Naples; wherever I went, your praises greeted me; the remembrance of your graces and virtues lingered after you, like the delicious fragrance of some exquisitely odorous flower. I made more than one attempt to meet you; but never succeeded, my movements being controlled by my mother's delicate health. I trod in your steps—I missed you only by a few days; but I saw you not; and every fresh disappointment excited a greater desire to behold you, by attaching something of a mysterious import to a meeting, so often approached, yet never accomplished.

“Signor Moreni could and would converse on nothing else but Grace Trevyllian, and the freedom of Italy, which seemed strangely connected in his enthusiastic mind. He was so energetic, so eloquent, that I caught his spirit, and Italy uprose before me freed from a foreign and domestic yoke, eclipsing the glories of her brightest days, whilst Grace Trevyllian appeared to my delighted fancy all

that woman has been—all that woman can be : the graces and virtues of her whole sex concentrated in her.”

“The Signor Moreni was always a dreamer and an enthusiast. You should have known that,” replied the blushing girl, as Ernest paused for a moment to take breath.

“Perhaps I did imagine something of the sort ; and in more sober moments despaired of the freedom of Italy, and of finding Miss Grace Trevyllian quite as perfect as he had painted her ; for his portrait had a beauty beyond the beauty of imperfect humanity ; but still I could not listen to him day after day without a growing desire to see her, who could inspire such glowing eloquence. At last we met—met unexpectedly ; and I must ask forgiveness for having been an involuntary spectator of your race with Julia, and as involuntary a listener of your succeeding conversation in the shed. Trifles, as they form the grand sum of existence, so do they also show the total of a

character. The ready kindness with which you yielded the nosegay, and soothed your sister's pique at her defeat, convinced me that the world had not destroyed the affectionate and generous dispositions of childhood; whilst your subsequent defence bound me your slave, as it not only engaged my gratitude, but my self-love in your favour; and alas! who shall deny the power of the latter upon our thoughts, and words, and deeds. The approach of the servant, and the awkwardness of announcing myself after such a conversation, prevented my claiming a renewal of our acquaintance as I had at first intended.

“With some difficulty I procured a ticket for the ball; and as your sister appeared to regard me as a stranger, though I half fancied your memory more perfect, I requested an introduction; I need not dwell on the events of that evening; when compelled to quit your side by the forms of society, still my heart was with you. I no longer accused Moreni of exaggera-

tion ; time and care had developed mind and person into a perfection, which I had not anticipated, whilst the heart retained the warm affections and generous impulses of earlier years. There was an intelligence—a forgetfulness of self—a simple earnestness in every look and tone, to me a thousand times more touching than Julia's resplendent beauty ; she thought only of the admiration she excited—you, delighting in her loveliness, thought not of the deeper passion you might yourself inspire. In your attentions to Mrs. Tuffnell, your readiness to quit the ball—in all you said and did, there was the same generous self-denial, which I had so much admired at Elmwood Lodge ; and I bade you adieu with the full determination of winning your love, and eventually your hand ; without which I felt that amid the greatest outward prosperity there would still be something wanting ; that I should not be happy.

“My fortune was small ; but from your conversation I judged that you were neither ambitious, nor Mr. Rolleston’s heiress as reported ; and so much fear and doubt seemed mingled with your affection for your uncle, that I did not consider his influence an insurmountable barrier to my hopes. You should be mine if the most devoted affection could win you.

“An accident detained me on the following day ; and when I reached Marsfield you were gone. Julia alone remained ; and her observations gave me the idea that you had purposely hurried your departure to avoid my visit.”

“I had no choice in the matter ; Mr. Rolleston ruled the time of our departure,” said the startled Grace.

“May I then hope that had the choice rested with you the result would have been different ?”

“Go on,” said Grace in a low voice, evading a direct reply.

“To clear myself, I must blame one who is dear to you,” he remarked with some embarrassment.

“You will blame in kindness, and only in self-defence,” answered Grace softly.

“That will I; for she is your sister; and as such, whatever wrong she has done me, and she has caused me much misery, I freely forgive. Though hurt at your apparent avoidance, I was still resolved to obtain another interview; when I received a letter from Leverton in which he not only declared his attachment to you, but also his engagement, implied if not openly avowed; requesting me to make enquiries concerning your welfare.

“Thus were all my hopes destroyed. Leverton had saved my life when attacked by banditti; and I could not in honour and gratitude undermine his happiness.”

“He was mistaken,” said Grace with involuntary quickness.

“So I have since learnt,” replied Ernest

with animation, deeming this denial far from discouraging, though his listener's face was carefully averted. "I accompanied my mother to town, and whilst there was often thrown into Julia's society, who always greeted me with warmth. She was too beautiful, too fascinating to be met with coldness; and though I was never blind to her vanity, my own was too much flattered by the pleasure she showed in my conversation—the deference she paid to my opinion, to avoid her presence, or judge her harshly, as I had formerly done when smarting beneath her ridicule. It was a triumph thus to have conquered her prejudice, and know myself envied by many; but she had a still greater charm in my eyes;—our discourse frequently turned on you; and though she confirmed my belief in your engagement to Leverton. I could not resist the dangerous pleasure of listening to your praises; and thus became the victim of my flattered pride, and a blameable weakness. Yet I never

contemplated treachery to my friend ; and convinced that Julia would marry from ambition, never guessed, till informed of the fact by Mrs. Carson, who feared for your sister's life, that this self-indulgence on my part had destroyed her peace, and perilled her health. I was still more shocked than surprised by Mrs. Carson's communication, who pleaded so powerfully for her friend, though without her knowledge, that, since you were bound to another, and could never be mine, I resolved to repair the pain I had involuntarily caused, as far as lay in my power.

“ No sooner was Julia equal to the trial, than candidly stating my former hopes and present feelings, I left her to decide on our future fate. At that time she loved me ; and we were engaged. Fascinated by her beauty—flattered by her preference, we might, and I think should have been happy, but for her vanity and the Gunning's ambition ; nay, for a time, we were happy ; for it was impossible for

mortal man to feel himself beloved by one so lovely, and in some respects, so amiable, and not return the affection that had chosen him from a crowd of envying admirers.

“ Not aware that your influence with Mr. Rolleston had been appealed to, I was surprised at his interference. That appeal should never have had my consent ; but I knew it not till your visit to town.

“ By degrees our happiness was clouded ;—the remembrance of my candour was painful to Julia. Accustomed to adulation from her childhood, she expected me to be the slave of her caprices and believe her faultless ; and on my remonstrating, reproached me with harshness, and a doubtful love, at the same time that she herself lent a ready ear to the idle compliments of every fashionable coxcomb. Nor were taunts from the Gunnings on my slender fortune, wanting to gall and provoke me—taunts in which she united passively, if not actively ;—but I will not dwell on what is

painful for you to hear, and me to tell. You saw how matters stood—you saw how she received, nay sought Lord Brotherton's attentions; and nothing but your friendly interference prevented the breaking off our engagement.

“ I had not met you unmoved, though your blushes, when I named Lord Leverton, convinced me of your affection for my friend; and my self reproaches at the emotion your presence excited made me more patient with Julia's coquetry—more willing to believe her penitence. I shunned your society, for I trembled at the quicker beating of my heart when you crossed my path; yet I saw enough to convince me that you were indifferent to all who sought your hand. You never more than submitted to, even sometimes repelled the attentions of Brotherton and others; and your whole manner confirmed my belief that your affections were already bestowed.

“ I ought to have been more grateful for your endeavours to reconcile my disputes with

Julia; but those very endeavours gave me pain, though I wrestled with the feeling, resolved that if my peace was wrecked for ever Julia should neither know, nor share my pangs. But who alas! can say that he has not only wisely resolved—but wisely acted?

“ Your sudden danger rendered me forgetful of all beside; and in the rapture of saving you my passionate expressions told my love; at least, so I believed at the time, though your eyes were scarcely opened ere they closed again. No sooner was I assured of your being restored to consciousness, than I hid myself from every eye, and the next three hours were spent in bitter agony, and deep humiliation. Uncertain whether you had heard my frenzied words, and doubtful whether in justice to Julia I should not reveal my involuntary treachery to her and Leverton, I was still undecided how to act, when your sister’s gratitude for your preservation, and her expressions of regard shamed me into silence, even whilst they increased my

remorse. Mr. Rolleston and others deemed my conduct bearish ;—had they read my heart, they might have pitied more than they condemned.

“ I resolved not to meet you again till you had become a wife, or I a husband ; and had I not been summoned to attend my mother should still have quitted town on the succeeding day.

“ I saw Julia no more ;—her letters grew rare and cold ;—she is now Lady Brotherton. May she be happy ! I have no right to blame her change since it caused me no pain. I was free—my heart was no longer torn with the struggles between love and honor ;—I could not seek your hand ; but I was not called on to wear the semblance of affection for another.

“ I went to Greece, and sought amid the monuments of the splendid past to forget those hopes too bright to be fulfilled. The great and the noble had suffered and succumbed—why

should I expect an exemption from the common lot of man? If those sufferers had sought relief from prayer to an Unknown God, I had the light of a purer faith to guide and support me. Amid the mouldering monuments of Athens' glory I felt more deeply that the destiny of man was not to do his own wild will, but to submit it to a higher Power.

“ But the hopes which I had so struggled to forget were revived by a letter from Leverton, announcing his attachment to Miss Logan.

“ I hurried to Naples—tarried only to learn that your engagement to Leverton had been little more than a fancy on his part; and then, without hinting my purpose, sped hither to explain the past, and plead for permission to love. At the first instant of our meeting I indulged in hopes checked by your almost immediate coldness: but now that I have told you all, may I not believe that you will forgive the crime of having loved too well; and pardon

the passionate words which revealed an attachment that no efforts had been able to subdue? Will you not say you forgive me?

“Yes—no—there is nothing to forgive;” faltered the agitated Grace in a voice so low, that none but a lover’s ear could have caught her meaning.

“Then you will not send me from you? You will permit me to gain an interest in that generous heart?”

“Perhaps you are not aware that my father’s fortune is very small; and that I can never be Mr. Rolleston’s heiress;” she remarked, instead of answering his question.

“I know all this; and why you cannot be Mr. Rolleston’s heiress; but the knowledge only urges me to greater boldness, since it prevents all suspicion of interested motives. Had you been rich I should have pleaded less resolutely. I have now alas! neither father, nor mother—let your parents be mine. Share my fortune, enough for happiness if not for splendour, and

I shall be blest indeed. Say that you will be mine dear Grace ? Say—”

“ If you please, ma’am, Missus has sent this umbrella; and begs that you and Doctor Whiston will come in directly, for fear of your catching cold,” said the errand and kitchen girl of the Trevyllians’ small establishment, whose approach had been unobserved.

The lovers, startled at the interruption, and perfectly unconscious that the rain had been pattering on the leaves above their heads for the last ten minutes, looked most innocently into the girl’s face—up to the sky—and then into each other’s eyes. Grace turned away; but not in anger; and Ernest felt from that lightning glance :—

“ So softly bright ;”

that his love was not despised; and taking the umbrella from the girl, whilst gently drawing Grace’s trembling hand within his arm, he proceeded slowly towards the house, piquing himself on his prudence in not detaining her

to listen to further petitions at the risk of her health.

So much for a lover's proper estimation of his own merits! the purport of his whispered words, as he led her along the gravel walk was only known to Grace, the tones being too soft and low to reach the ears of the girl who followed close behind.

"My dear child, how could you be so imprudent as to stay out in the rain? And how could you detain her, Doctor Whiston?" said Mrs. Trevyllian reproachfully, meeting the lovers at the door.

"It is not Doctor Whiston, but Mr. Dudley," replied her daughter in considerable confusion.

She was on the point of adding—we did not know it rained; but prudently refrained from such a self-convicting admission.

Mrs. Trevyllian could not quite suppress a smile at having mistaken the fine young man

before for the ugly old Doctor ; but guessing the truth with woman's wit, she apologised for her unintended rudeness, and gave the stranger a ready welcome.

As Grace, whilst perfectly frank on many subjects, had never willingly named Ernest Dudley, her parents knowing him only as Julia's jilted lover, felt a little awkwardness at his first introduction ; but his open, friendly manner soon banished all restraint ; and when, on Grace's being called from the room, he explained his hopes, and pleaded for their fulfilment, entering into such details as cleared him from levity in transferring his pretensions from one sister to the other, he had the pleasure of finding that his suit was not likely to be opposed. Trevyllian and his wife having felt how mutual affection can soothe the cares of life, had no wish to dictate to Grace in such an important subject as the choice of a husband. They had no ambitious views for

their daughter, and considered Dudley's income of fourteen hundred a year more than enough for happiness.

Ernest had been a guest at Nettlefield about a week, and was standing at the open window, conversing with his lady-love, when a carriage stopped at the little wicket, and a footman in livery passing up the gravel walk knocked at the door.

"My uncle's carriage and servant! What can it mean?" exclaimed poor Grace, turning red and white in a moment, as the remembrance of the conversation immediately preceding his seizure came across her.

The whole party were startled at the sudden exclamation and unlooked for occurrence; and each by looks, repeated the question,—What can it mean? The meaning was soon explained.

Mr. Rolleston was waiting at the village inn, and had sent a note for Miss Trevyllian.

"You said you would come at my bidding;

—follow the bearer !” were the only words which that note contained.

“ Do not go, Grace ; or let me accompany you ;” exclaimed the anxious Ernest, seeing in Mr. Rolleston’s unexpected arrival, and brief billet an intention to forbid his niece’s marriage.

Grace pleaded her promise ; and her parents leaving the point to her decision, though inwardly desiring her to go, the lover was obliged to yield.

“ I wish your uncle had remained at Rolleston Court, love ;” said Dudley as he attended her to the gate.

She smiled to reassure him ; and the carriage drove off.

Mr. Rolleston was pacing the best room at the Angel with impatient steps as his niece entered the apartment. It had been impossible to judge of his mood or his purpose from his short note, the brevity of which had been unpromising, and Grace looked up with some anxiety to read his meaning in his face. That one look

was enough—his arms were held towards her ; and the next instant she was clinging round his neck, and sobbing on his shoulder. And he too was weeping !—that proud, stern man, whom so many feared, and so few loved ; and who had borne the trials of a long life with tearless eyes.

“ Your affection has conquered my pride, Grace ; and I am come to seek your forgiveness for my cruelty.”

“ Do not say this to me, dear uncle ; I remember no cruelty ;—I think only of all your care and affection,” replied his niece, gazing on him gratefully through her tears.

“ You must not look at me thus, Grace, or I shall go hang myself for sheer remorse ; I should feel less if you would be angry or sulky.”

“ Oh ! but I cannot be either ;—I am so very happy ! I was sadly afraid I should never see you again ; and now that we have met you shall not leave me.”

“ You shall rule me as you will for the future, in reparation of the past.”

“ May I? May I speak my wishes in all things, dear uncle?”

“ Yes, in all things ; I am not what I was ; but I trust a humbler, and a better man. I have been ill since you left me, and suffering brings thought. The shadow of death was over me—I learned to pray as I had never prayed before. Pride was subdued by pain, and I saw myself, as I really was, a stern, and sinful man, harsh and vindictive to my brethren, and rebellious to my God, who had so mercifully lent me time for penitence, and grace to see my guilt and turn to him. There was no peace by day—no sleep by night. I missed my loving nurse ;—no menial could ever smooth my pillow, and smile me into hope as she had done.”

“ Why did not you send for me ?” asked his niece reproachfully.

“ For a time I was too proud, and would not

even allow myself to be very ill, lest you should hear of it; besides I had sent you away; and it was fitting that I should come to fetch you back. And how could I hope for your forgiveness?"

"How could you doubt it? Think of all your kindness for two years."

"You over-rate that kindness. If not entirely to annoy the Gunnings and Mrs. Bradley, or to make you an instrument for wounding your parents as I once stated, still such were in part my motives. My first visit to Elmwood Lodge was not accidental; I had spies on you and Julia, and hence some part of my seemingly superhuman penetration. Though I was a little touched by your painful position in the Bradley family, and the unselfish temper, which I discovered beneath your awkward and sullen demeanour, had Julia been likely to further my plan, which was to alienate whichever child I took from its parents, and make her my heiress to gall Trevyllian and his wife, I should have

chosen her instead of you. With her vanity she would never have been contented at Rolleston Court, with only the rooks to admire her beauty; and her disquietude would have disturbed my peace. You were of a more affectionate temper;—having been accustomed to seclusion and neglect would be grateful for any kindness; and though of a determined spirit might, I thought, be moulded to my wishes by the dread of losing that splendour which it was my purpose to make needful to your happiness. The union with young Jolliffe was merely an accidental circumstance fitting in with my other schemes. It is true that not being as cold and stern as the world believed, you gradually won me to affection; but that was rather against my will than with it; so you see, Grace, I have no claim to your gratitude.”

“Yes you have; I will not believe one quarter of the ugly things that you have said against yourself. You must not refuse my gratitude, it is such a luxury, such a happiness to be grate-

ful!" exclaimed the affectionate girl, kissing his cheek.

Mr. Rolleston was much moved.

"You always were and will be a simpleton," he replied, returning her caress.

"No such thing, uncle! I am very wise; only mine is the wisdom of the heart, not of the head."

"True, Grace; you are wiser than your reproacher. I have fretted away a life, the prey of vindictive feelings, when I might have basked in the sunshine of affection; you must teach me some of your heart's wisdom; but first, let me say that I have destroyed that hateful will. I wonder how I could dictate such words, and watch you trace them without a murmur. It was worse than savage cruelty; and I have often in my fancy seen you since, as I saw you then, so pale, so patient, yet so heart-broken; but, even at that moment of almost fiendish triumph, you were still the happier of the two."

“I am afraid, uncle, had you seen my heart at that moment, you would have seen more pride than patience; to say nothing of a still worse feeling: I could have borne anything better than the legacy to Stephen Bradley.”

“That was a refinement of cruelty on which I piqued myself; for I despised the sordid wretch as much as you could do. You may forget this, but I must remember it to my dying day. There is a later will at Rolleston, making you sole heiress of all my property: I have not even bequeathed a legacy to an old servant, leaving all dependant on your generosity, as some little reparation.

“Long, long, may that will be useless! But you said I might ask what I would.”

“I did—ask boldly, Grace.”

“Thanks! thanks, dear uncle! Then I wish you would make a third will, leaving Henry Trevyllian your heir instead of Grace. A

father may feel some awkwardness on being dependent on a child."

Mr. Rolleston embraced his niece in silence : he could not speak—he had no words to tell his admiration of her generous disregard of self.

"It shall be partly as you wish," he said, after a pause of some moments. "And now conduct me to your parents, though I cannot expect the father to be as forgiving as the daughter."

"You do not know my father," remarked Grace with a child's proud affection. "There is one circumstance," she added looking down in some confusion ; "but you said, dear uncle, that I might ask what I would. Mr. Dudley—"

"Oh ! I know all that, Grace ; and you may save your blushes for your lover's pretty speeches ; as I said before, I have my spies about you. Ernest Dudley has long possessed my esteem, though I would fain have withheld it ; and, as your husband, he shall share my

affection. His father was right in warning my early love of my passions ; and she did wisely in acting on that warning ; the pangs I endured were the just punishment of my sinful mood. This self conviction has only come after fearful struggles ; but I have now a peace I never knew whilst the slave of anger and revenge. Let us go ! I long to see your father, whilst I dread our meeting.”

As they proceeded towards the cottage, her uncle’s hand clasped in both hers, Grace marked, for the first time, how much he was changed since their parting ; and comprehended all that so proud a spirit must have endured ere brought to its present humility.

“ You would like to see my father alone ; I will go and tell him,” said Grace as the carriage stopped at the wicket.

“ No ; let your mother be with him ;—she suffered from my fury—she must witness my humiliation.”

“ Stop one moment !” said Dudley inter-

cepting Grace, as she was returning to Mr. Rolleston, after preparing her parents for the meeting. "I hope—"

"You are always hoping something; but do go into that room, like a good, quiet creature, till my uncle has passed; for he would rather not see you just at this moment."

"For what has he come?" asked her lover with a clouding brow.

"To make us all happy; so do as I bid you—for once; and do not look vexed."

"Will you return immediately and tell me his purpose?"

"Directly;—but I thought men were never curious"—she added with a smile, as she closed the door upon him.

"Now tell me, as you promised;—what are Mr. Rolleston's intentions?" said Ernest, advancing to meet her as Grace reentered the room a few minutes after."

"To take us all back to Rolleston Court."

"I feared as much," exclaimed Dudley passionately. "He will try to part us; and you—"

“ Will not go to Rolleston unless you accompany us.”

“ May I believe you ?” questioned the lover eagerly.

“ When did I tell you an untruth, that you should doubt me now ?”

“ And nothing shall part us ?” he continued to make assurance doubly sure.

“ Nothing but your own will, or the will of heaven. You must not cloud my joy by looking so mistrustful. I am so very happy now !”

“ And were you not happy before, love ?” asked Ernest a little reproachfully.

“ Did you never read how in the Eastern Apologue the professor floated a rose leaf on the brimming cup, to show that its fulness might yet admit of an addition without running over ?” questioned his mistress, with bewitching playfulness.

“ Thank you, my own sweet love ! Then I may consider myself as the brimming cup, and Mr. Rolleston as only the rose leaf.”

“ Out upon such vanity !” exclaimed the blushing Grace.

We are not going to record young Dudley’s arguments to disprove the charge of vanity, as others might not consider them quite as eloquent and convincing as did Grace Trevyllian ; but simply state that his first meeting with Mr. Rolleston removed all doubts as to that gentleman’s friendly intentions, and ensured his future esteem and gratitude.

“ Then you do not object to my carrying off Trevyllian immediately ?” said Mr. Rolleston to Doctor Whiston on the succeeding day, as the whole party were sitting together.

“ On the contrary, change of air may do him good ; but he must be kept quiet,” replied the kind, yet eccentric Doctor. “ Quiet ! with such an irruption of Goths as this,” he added, starting up on perceiving the approach of many persons, and making his exit by a side door as speedily as possible.

“ Dear Charlotte, and Emma, and Major

Rawdon," exclaimed Grace with joyful surprise, as she too looked from the window.

Her first impulse was to hurry out to meet her friends, her next to turn an anxious glance on Mr. Rolleston.

"You need not be alarmed; I shall behave like a very good boy," said her uncle replying to her look.

A grateful smile was his reward; and the affectionate Grace no longer hesitating, met her friends at the porch; and was the next moment in the arms of Charlotte from whence she was transferred to the embrace of Emma.

"Now comes my turn," cried Major Rawdon.

"And then mine," said Lord Leverton.

"She will have nothing to do with such impertinent coxcombs," exclaimed Mr. Bradley, adroitly stepping between, and giving Grace one of his usual parental hugs.

"I claim my little wife," said Major Rawdon.

"I wonder you and Charlotte are not both afraid of venturing into my presence, for fear of being prosecuted for bigamy. And to think

of your impudence in still calling me your little wife !" exclaimed Grace Trevyllian, giving her hand to her old friend, laughing, blushing, and weeping all at once, as she thought of their last meeting, when she had asked him so boldly to take her with him.

"We throw ourselves on your mercy," cried Rawdon and his wife in a breath.

"Though, in fact, it was all your fault," continued the latter : my heart was bestowed on the Major Rawdon you praised so eloquently before I had ever seen him."

"It seems I am always to blame in these cases," said Grace with an arch glance at Lord Leverton, turning to shake hands with him and Lord Hillbury.

"Emma has engaged that you shall forgive me," replied the Viscount, looking a little ashamed.

"And of course you believe all Emma says," remarked Grace with a smile.

"I have never forgiven myself for bringing you and Mrs. Trevyllian to beggary," exclaimed

Major Rawdon, after shaking hands with his old friend. "So many years of exile, and of suffering! But we have lived to see better times—you must reside with us, and form but one family; Charlotte and I will take no refusal," he added, introducing his wife.

"I must put my veto on that," remarked Mr. Rolleston, advancing from the window where he had hitherto stood unobserved by the visitors.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Rolleston; I was not aware of your presence," said Rawdon, drawing himself up with a heightened colour.

"Nor of the change in my feelings, or, I hope, you would greet me more cordially, though I have no right to expect your forgetfulness of my former rudeness. Will you, my dear Mrs. Rawdon, play the peace maker, and assure your husband that there is no one I esteem more highly, feeling truly grateful for his zealous and constant friendship towards my nephew."

The wondering Rawdon looked at Trevyllian

and his wife—read the truth in their happy smiles, and then frankly held out his hand to the only man, whom he had ever hated.

“To convince me of your entire forgiveness, you and Mrs. Rawdon must accompany the Trevyllians to Rolleston Court,” said its owner pressing the hand so freely given.

“Oh, yes! we will certainly come. I long for a row in the canoe,” replied Mrs. Rawdon with a sly glance at her husband, who, after a moment’s doubt and vexation, burst into a hearty laugh.

“You shall pay for this Charlotte. I hope the canoe is broken up, Mr. Rolleston.”

“On the contrary, I have preserved it as a trophy of your prowess, of which I shall have great pleasure in beholding a second exhibition.”

“At the expence of a second swim?” asked Rawdon, all his vexation gone on meeting instead of that hateful cynical smile of former times, a friendly gaiety.”

“Rather than submit to a coroner’s inquest

at Rolleston, Court—a vulgarity beneath my dignity.”

“You have not forgotten my youthful folly sir.”

“Would that I had nothing worse than such youthful folly to account for!” observed Mr. Rolleston gravely. “You may have learnt ere this Major Rawdon not to ridicule your friend’s uncle within hearing of his servant.”

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Rolleston.”

“It is I who should beg your’s, Major Rawdon, for listening to such gossip; but it suited my mood at that time to shorten your stay by making it unpleasant; you will find me now a more hospitable host. Ask your wife if I cannot play that character.”

“I will believe it without her testimony.”

“Nevertheless my testimony shall be given; I have spent many delightful hours at Rolleston Court,” said Mrs. Rawdon.

“Is Rolleston here?” asked Mr. Bradley of Grace, whom he had detained in the hall to question and congratulate concerning Dudley, catching the name.

“Yes.”

“Then I shall be off; having no fancy to meet him again. So good bye, Gracey. You can explain that I must go home directly.”

“Stay awhile; my uncle is a different person to what he was when you saw him last.”

“It is to be hoped so,” observed Bradley drily.

“It is to be hoped so,” repeated Mr. Rolleston, who had overheard the remark, advancing to greet his cousin with an extended hand.

For once in his life the warm-hearted Bradley refused to take an offered hand, drawing himself up with a stiff bow, and a step towards the door.

“I have no right to complain of this repulse after my conduct to you in my own house; but, for that conduct I am ready to make any—every apology.”

“I do not care a straw for what you said to me, Mr. Rolleston; it was your wish to part husband and wife; and what you said of your nephew, which makes me withhold my hand,” said his cousin bluntly.

“I have no longer such a wish ; my nephew and his wife will be my guests during my life—my heirs, with reversion to Grace, at my death. I honour you for your boldness in telling me the truth, and withstanding my anger, which so few would have ventured on doing. If you require me to say more—”

“Not I,” replied Bradley interrupting him, and grasping his hand. “I am only vexed that I believed you to be in earnest then ; and could not now understand my little Gracey’s joyous smiles. I am a happy man to-day ; but mind, Gracey, I am to be at the wedding.”

“I will engage for that,” said Mr. Rolleston. “We should all feel that something was wanting if cousin Bradley were away on such an occasion.”

“You here !” exclaimed Lord Leverton on first seeing Dudley. “I thought you left Naples at an hour’s notice on most important business, refusing to wait, though only a few days, for us.”

“I appeal to you, Miss Logan ;—is not

matrimony a most important business?" said Dudley, addressing that young lady.

"Make no appeal to me, Mr. Dudley; I leave you and Lord Leverton to settle that point between you," replied the blushing Emma.

"Matrimony!" exclaimed his lordship in surprise. "Do you mean that you are going to marry Grace Trevyllian, instead of—"

"Julia," said Dudley, concluding the sentence. Such are my hopes; and but for the belief of your engagement she would have been mine long since."

"Is this true? Then I know not what I deserve for my presumptuous folly; you must hate me."

"I can never hate my gallant defender," said Dudley with feeling; adding more gaily:—"I only hope Miss Logan will tease you a little;—if my advice can accomplish this, consider it effected."

"Take care that I do not retaliate with Grace," observed the viscount, laughing.

Little more remains to be told; for who

cares to hear of wedding dresses,—wedding settlements,—wedding looks,—or even wedding cakes?

Enough that Leverton and Dudley were married on the same day at Rolleston church, by Mr. Bolton; and that the gravity of the company was endangered by a dispute between the bridegrooms, touching the point of precedence and the perfections of their respective brides.

Trevyllian and his wife continued to reside with Mr. Rolleston, who became so much attached to the latter that he never felt quite happy in her absence.

The change in Mr. Rolleston was not a mere outward and transitory change, but inward and lasting; a change of principle and character, evidenced by fruits;—pride giving place to humility—sternness to gentleness. Mr. Bolton, who had before been avoided, was now counted a welcome visitor; and that worthy clergyman, who had so long “Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way,”—had the pleasure of seeing him, who had for years been opposed to real vital

christianity, become its humble, hopeful follower.

Trevyllian recovered his health, and Rolleston Court lost all appearance of gloom from its many joyous associations. Who could see the happy Grace, and her no less happy husband sporting on the velvet lawn, watched with affectionate interest by her parents and uncle, and think the scene was sombre?

Grace was welcomed back by the domestics, who had bade her adieu, with a joy that nearly destroyed the wonted stately etiquette; and the poor had no less cause to bless her return.

The evening before the wedding Mr. Rolleston calling Grace and Ernest into his study, placed a packet in the hands of the former.

“ You need not prepare to look grateful, it is not a jewel case ;” said her uncle, smiling at her surprise. “ Though a handsome wedding present, it is not for you to receive, but to give. Bradley deserves some compensation for losing all chance of becoming my heir, as also for his expence in your nurture and education; the last no little trouble, since you were such a

a stupid dunce, that Miss Heywood could never teach you her sublime style of conversing."

"Oh! if that is all, dear uncle, I could soon acquire it now, and outdo my teacher. Shall I begin?"

"If you wish to be turned out of the room. if not out of the house."

"I know better than that, uncle; and am not at all afraid," replied his niece looking up in his face.

"I pity you, Ernest," said her uncle in an audible aside. "You fancy that you can do any thing, Miss Grace, and so have grown impertinent; prove your power by persuading Bradley to take this from you;—ten thousand pounds I consider poor payment for all the trouble you must have cost him; beside stepping between him and his inheritance."

"Dear, kind, good uncle; I wonder how I could ever oppose you;" exclaimed the delighted Grace, throwing her arms round his neck.

"Why perhaps had I coaxed instead of com-

manded, Ernest might have had to seek another bride."

"I do not quite say that," whispered his niece; yet not so low but her lover heard it.

It required great persuasion to induce the honest Bradley, though pressed for money, to accept Mr. Rolleston's magnificent gift. He had only done his duty by the poor child, he declared; and her affection had amply repaid him; but the united entreaties of Grace and Ernest at length overcame his reluctance; Mrs. Bradley did not long survive the marriage which destroyed all her hopes of eventually becoming mistress of Rolleston Court, and confirmed the happiness of the object of her dislike and tyranny; and Harriet, on her mother's decease, took up her abode with a distant relative.

Henry, after numerous penchants, married the daughter of one of their country neighbours, the very person whom his father most desired to see his wife; and her prudence, and good temper, not only assisted in gradually clearing

the estate of all encumbrances, but made Elmwood Lodge a happy home for the warm-hearted old man, whose delight was complete when he succeeded in perfecting, at least in his own opinion, the plough to which so much of his time had been devoted, and to which he gave the name of 'The Grace,' to the great amusement of his favorite, and the wonder of the plough boys. According to his principle, the principle of self-interest, and individual aggrandisement, Stephen Bradley married the scion of a powerful house, whose pride and ill temper soon taught him, but too late for his peace, that even this world has things of higher worth than wealth and rank. Live with her in comfort he could not—part from her he dared not, on account of her connections; and so they lived on hating, and hated; blaming, and recriminating.

And Julia—what became of the beautiful Julia? What was her lot in life? What she had predicted of herself.

"To know the right, and yet the wrong pursue."

For some time after her marriage she had to endure the reproaches of her disappointed husband ; and the privations, if not of absolute poverty, at least of very scanty means ; but the vanity of one who desired to be considered a relation of Lord Sellmore's inducing him to bequeath the whole of his large property to the earl and his son, the young couple were enabled to live in a style befitting their rank.

“ Now that we are no longer poor I shall be happy,” thought Julia. Was she happy ? No : in wealth, or in poverty, the mind remained the same. Vanity is an insatiable monster, whose appetite can never be gorged ; and the beautiful Viscountess Brotherton, whom the world praised and envied, was a more fitting subject for contempt or pity. Piqued at her husband's neglect, though she loved him not, she sought to forget in the admiration of crowds that her hand was bestowed on one, at the best, indifferent ; whilst her heart had been given to one, who now despised her. Yes ; the envied was the envier !—the flattered and courted

Lady Brotherton envied the quiet and domestic Mrs. Dudley.

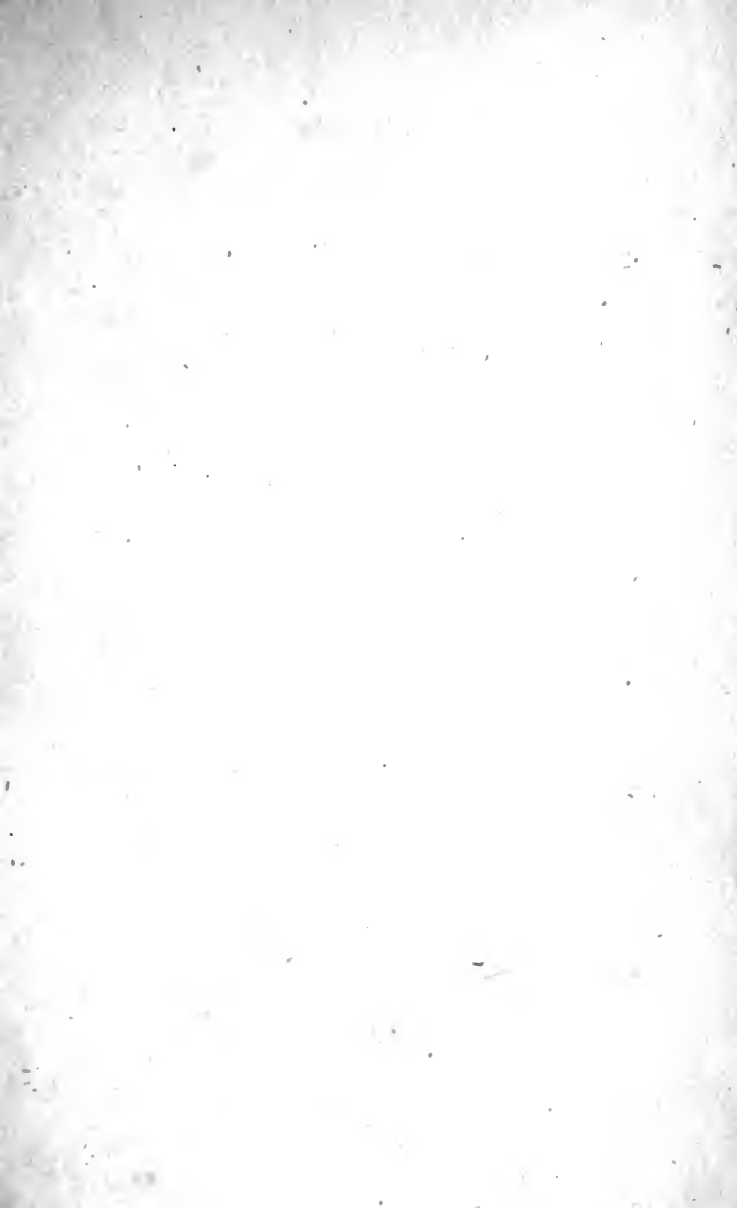
Former occurrences must have prevented any particular intimacy; but the Viscountess shrank from even a second meeting. The happiness of Grace and her husband;—his open, manly affection, and her womanly devotion formed a contrast to her own lot too painful to be borne.

It was not till some months after their union that accident revealed to Dudley the name of his kind Swiss nurse; a discovery which if it awakened his gratitude, could scarcely increase his regard.

“ Ah ! I had a hand in that match;—I introduced them,” said Mr. Tuffnell to the whole county.

The young couple laughed when they heard it; and always gave him and his friendly wife a cordial welcome.

THE END.







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